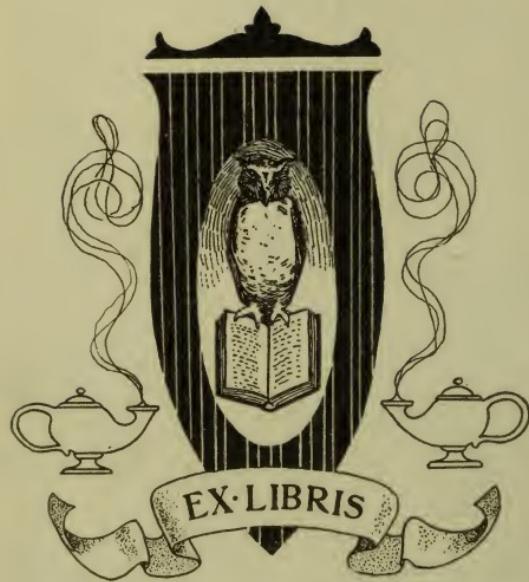


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THE
SISTERS OF ORLEANS:
A TALE OF
RACE AND SOCIAL CONFLICT.

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CONTENTS.

PART I.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	Lawyer and Client,	II
II.	By Way of Preparation,	25
III.	The Master and His Plantation,	32
IV.	Friend and Victim,	39
V.	On the Road,	42
VI.	The Hidden Beauty,	54
VII.	Garden and Bower,	68
VIII.	Poor Moth,	79
IX.	The Swamp-Squatter's Home,	89
X.	Reaching a Crisis,	98
XI.	A Northern Man in the South,	107
XII.	The Triangle Building and the Contraband School,	120
XIII.	Lowly Lovers,	132
XV.	The Flight and the Midnight Duel,	147
XVI.	A Lover's Perplexity,	161
XVII.	End of Suspense,	169
XVIII.	Gathering of the Storm,	175
XIX.	The Mob,	183

PART II.

I.	About Good Blood,	196
II.	South <i>vs.</i> North,	213
III.	Taking up the Thread,	223
IV.	Continuing the Thread,	236
V.	The Two Isabella's Meet,	240
VI.	The Swamp-Squatter's Home Again,	251
VII.	Dr. Clay and His Patient,	260
VIII.	In the Sick Room,	268
IX.	Jefferson and Rose,	276
X.	A Yankee Trick,	291
XI.	Preparing for the Sacrifice,	297
XII.	At the Altar,	305
XIII.	A Woman's Power,	317
XIV.	A Woman's Vengeance,	324
XV.	Northward Bound and Conclusion,	334

PRELIMINARY.



SOON after the close of that great civil conflict which accomplished for a Race a revolution it failed to bring to a Nation, it was my lot and privilege, in the discharge of certain semi-official and semi-charitable duties, to be led into relations of confidence with a number of freedmen who, through the exigencies of the war, had been transferred from Southern to Northern homes. The opportunity thus afforded of studying the development of a people who had long been deprived of what we justly look upon as our dearest natural rights, when brought into a new atmosphere—legal, social and material, was exceedingly gratifying ; but on no account more so than for the chance it gave me of gathering from their own lips a recital of their observations while in a condition of dependence—a rare chance ; for with all their reputed propensity for “story telling,” I have generally found the freedmen loath to speak of anything recalling their term of bondage.

The most communicative, if not most intelligent, member of that class whom it was my fortune to meet, was a young man of mixed blood, bearing the name of Tully ; although he had, in addition, adopted the surname of an officer in the Union army to whom he was strongly attached. Of Tully’s earlier history, enough for the purposes of this work will be gathered from his own pen in the chapter immediately following.

In the capacity of servant to masters of high position in Southern society before the war, he had gained a knowledge of certain passages of domestic history which were curious, if not instructive, in themselves ; and which, when related with the spirited and ready delivery with which the ex-slave was gifted, possessed an undeniable charm. So struck was I with some of the incidents he described, that I was induced to suggest to him that he should write them out for publication, although he seemed to distrust his ability for authorship too much to seriously entertain the idea.

There was one story which, in particular, made a deep impression on my mind. It was a narrative of events transpiring before the war, and which furnished, as I believed, an accurate and forcible portrayal of the bearings of slavery upon both high and low. Besides the historical interest it possessed, by reason of the exhibit it made of the workings of that institution, which was an anomaly in our system of government, and which must appear even more strangely exceptional to coming generations than to the present one, it seemed to me to have a practical value in exposing with graphic fidelity the sources and operations of that prejudice which the master-race had long indulged towards the subject one, particularly in cases, unfortunately not very rare, where the two have been represented in the veins of the same person. Relating to a period when that feeling existed in its highest intensity, and exhibited its most striking phenomena, it appeared to be well calculated to throw light upon that conflict through which we shall be called to pass, in fixing the social status of the colored race, at no very distant day.

That such a conflict is approaching, following the freedman's elevation to an equality of civil right and privilege

as the bayonet-charge follows the opening volley, it needs no spirit of prophecy to foretell. In fact it is scarcely too much to say that, with the late bondsman's admission to stations of high public trust, the struggle has already begun. As the black man accumulates wealth and intelligence in keeping with his improved opportunities, and especially as he reaches political position through the instrumentality of the ballot, it is not to be supposed that he will patiently consent to remain socially ostracized on account of the color of his skin. At the same time it is equally certain that any claim he may make in that regard will meet with a bitter, and probably protracted, resistance. Hence whatever tends to illustrate the passions which are to take part in the coming contest between the strongest forces of our nature, cannot be wholly devoid of profitable entertainment.

With a change of circumstances not here necessary to be detailed, came a change in my location and employments. Several years went by, during which I heard nothing of Tully and his fortunes; but it so happened that I again visited the scene of my labors among the freedmen. Scarcely had my return become known to them, before I found myself waited upon by a colored man bearing a package which he said was from my old acquaintance Tully.

"Dis he gib me to gib to you, Sar, only a little while 'fore he went," remarked the messenger as he delivered the parcel into my hand.

"Went where?" I inquired with newly-awakened interest.

"Home."

The lowered voice and saddened countenance of the speaker told to what home he referred. Tully was dead. A wound received during the war, and never wholly

healed, together with the cold, searching air of our Northern climate, had brought on a decline leading to a fatal termination.

An inspection of the manuscript, for such the package was, showed an attempt on the part of the deceased to follow my suggestion with regard to the tale I have referred to. It was manifest, however, that the work had been but partially accomplished when failing strength had arrested its progress. Portions of the story had been apparently prepared to the writer's satisfaction, while other parts remained only in outline.

No word of instruction or request from the author accompanied the document. Left thus to my own responsibility, and still entertaining the views relative to the value of the tale I have already signified, I felt it to be a duty to secure its completion. Accordingly I set about the execution of the task by supplying, as best I could, the parts that were incomplete, and by introducing such alterations in the balance as seemed to be called for. These, however, consisted of nothing more than modifications, for the sake of greater intelligibility, in dialect, as rendered in certain conversational passages, and a thorough substitution of names, founded upon the apprehension that those given in the original draught might possibly lead to identification, and be productive of unpleasantness. In all other respects the freedman's story will be found without change.

THE
SISTERS OF ORLEANS.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

LAWYER AND CLIENT.

EABRY ANTHONY—to give him the benefit of his calling and station—Seabry Anthony, Esquire, was a respectable member of the New Orleans bar. I say *respectable*, because respectability was his strong point. He was one of those fortunate persons who, without brilliancy, achieve success in whatever they undertake. A member of a respectable profession, he had, by close attention to its demands, reached a respectable standing in it. He had married into a respectable family, and his wife moved in a respectable circle. He lived in a respectable mansion, in a respectable street, and his carriage, his servants, and the general order of his household, were of the most respectable sort. He attended a fashionable, and, therefore, very respectable church ; occupied a prominent pew, and contributed respectably, but not liberally, to the support of the pastor. He was universally regarded as a respectable member of the community, but by none more so than himself.

He was a well-preserved man of forty-five, and stout to the verge of corpulency. His eyes, which were overhung by bushy brows until they somewhat resembled dormer-windows, were grayish, large and cold. His complexion showed that the troubles of other people, with which he was in a professional way accustomed to burden himself, interfered with neither appetite nor digestion—all of which accorded with the highest respectability.

He was a man of honor, which, in the circle in which he moved, implied not only that he was a civil gentleman, but that he was ready to vindicate himself after the manner usual among gentlemen. One “affair” in which he had figured, quite established his reputation. The parties had met, exchanged shots, and then had shaken hands.

There were whispered insinuations of sharp practice on more than one occasion in his business, but all in a professional way, which assisted in bringing confiding clients.

His office was in a central and prominent building. “Seabry Anthony, Counsellor-at-Law,” in gilt letters, met you conspicuously as you entered the first floor hall-way conducting to the higher stories. The same sign confronted you at the first door you came to, when, up a long straight stairway, you had climbed to the second floor. Opening the door thus labelled, it was to find yourself in a good-sized apartment, the centre of which was occupied by a large office-table covered with a dingy green cloth. On two sides of the room were heavy book-cases, containing numerous volumes of leather-clad lore, ranged like a field-army in long regular lines, with the usual accompaniment of skirmishers and camp-followers in the form of pamphlets, government reports and book-publishers’ catalogues. On the topmost shelves, upon close examination, might have been discovered several copies,

some bound and some in paper, of the most popular sensation novels of the day. Upon still closer inspection, it might have been found that the dust had not accumulated to the same depth upon this class of literature as upon the leather-protected volumes, suggesting that the latter did duty chiefly on exhibition as evidence of the erudition the establishment was understood to contain. It should be mentioned, however, in justice to the respectable head of the office, that for the tomes of lighter literature he was not responsible, they being the property of two subordinates, half clerks and half students, rendering service on half pay, in whose charge this room was usually left.

The other sides of the apartment were taken up by windows, a tall case of pigeon-holes crammed with manuscripts and old correspondence, and a couple of desks at which the students or assistants referred to were supposed to pursue their labors and studies.

Besides the students, the only regular occupant of the room was Tully, a colored office boy ; so named by somebody—his mother probably—at a period beyond which his memory ran ; but whose classic appellation his mischievous room-mates had taken the liberty of changing, by the substitution of a letter, into “Bully.”

Tully, or “Bully,” the name he most frequently had to answer to, was a waif in the most absolute sense. He belonged to no race of human beings. He had had a mother ; and, as for that matter, a father too, who, being a man of wealth and high social position, some others, more fortunate than he, were proud and happy to address as the author of their being. But that great and good man, as society regarded him, would have turned up his nose in horrible indignation had Tully, the “nigger,” presumed upon such a liberty. It was not so much because

the boy was an illegitimate, as because his mother had had a mother, and she a mother who had been imported with other merchandise from an African barracoon. Tully's countenance told the tale of his maternal progeniture. That was quite sufficient to absolve the aristocratic white man from all obligation to the yellow cub he had helped to bring into existence. Some might think there was a moral claim in the case, but if there was, it troubled neither parent nor child. The latter was quite indifferent to the luxury of a father. He had heard of such a parent as he had of heaven, with a vague idea that both were good things in their way ; but beyond that he neither knew nor cared.

The result of such anomalous position was, that the boy was neither a white person nor a negro. The white race, to which he bore the nearest kinship, repudiated him utterly ; while the blacks could not rightfully claim him as belonging to them. He had no people. That he did belong to somebody, however, was proved by a deed of transfer held by Seabry Anthony, in which it was expressed that, in consideration of one thousand dollars, "had and received," all right and title in and to him had become the property of that respectable barrister. The instrument was signed by the worthy and eminent individual who was understood to be the natural progenitor—however unnatural his conduct might appear to some—of the chattel aforesaid. His legal obligation was good and perfectly binding, notwithstanding the looseness with which he wore the moral obligation imposed by his unrecognized relationship to the property transferred.

Tully was a youth of between fifteen and sixteen years of age. His duties were to attend office, run errands, and make himself generally useful to his master ; and to submit patiently to the various persecutions the ingenuity

of his room-fellows, the students, led them to impose. His time was largely occupied in sitting target for the paper-pellets and tobacco-quids the latter were at intervals moved to discharge at his head. Sometimes he was set up as judge by his tormentors, and gravely addressed as "Your Honor," when, as opposing counsel, in the course of moot trials, they were inclined to exercise their wits upon knotty legal questions. But in such cases, he was no exception to the rule which makes a judge odious to the losing side. A decision being always insisted upon, his unfailing reward was a cuffing from the unsuccessful pleader.

But notwithstanding occasional discomforts, his situation was by no means a trying nor very disagreeable one. The punishments to which he was exposed were no greater than a "nigger" was made to endure, if not such as he positively enjoyed. Had he reflected upon the subject at all, it is possible that he might have been brought to a feeling of adequate thankfulness. As it was, he knew his position well enough to give ready obedience to his master, and to grin good-naturedly when the aim of the students, in hurling their harmless projectiles, happened to be more than ordinarily accurate. By way of compensation his tormentors occasionally supplied him with small sums of spending money, and—what in the end proved to be of much greater advantage—assisted him in acquiring a knowledge of reading and writing, for which, since he had become an inmate of a law office, he had conceived an extraordinary longing.

Nor was the slave-boy's experience, at this time, devoid of other profitable results. One advantage he possessed was in being presumed to have been born without ears, except when directly spoken to by his superiors, when they were required to be sharp enough. For that

reason he was suffered to be present with his master on numerous occasions when much learned and valuable counsel was given, and when the facts of most interesting cases, involving property and reputation, if not life itself, were confidentially detailed. It was in that way—which proves how accurate was the source of information—that a knowledge of many of the incidents related in the following pages was obtained. But as Tully—"poor Tully!"—perhaps some one will be moved to exclaim, in view of his isolation from humanity—is not to figure as actor or hero, in any sense, in the scenes and incidents hereafter to be introduced, an apology is, at this point, due to the reader for the attention that has been bestowed upon him. His saffron countenance will not be again seen, except in occasional and accidental glimpses as he stands behind chairs, or looks over shoulders, when his eyes have nothing else to do.

The apartment of which I have given an outline sketch, although the principal office, rarely saw the light of Seabry Anthony's countenance. His room, and one that was much smaller, was back, and entered from the main office by a door. Here was his *sanctum sanctorum*, made sacred by the presence of the great lawyer himself. The clerks only entered this retreat upon the call of their principal, and then with uncovered heads and countenances of sombre demureness. Tully, who was, as before explained, supposed to be without ears, was often permitted to remain like the other furniture of the establishment. Here all clients were received, and here Seabry Anthony, Esquire, sat in solemn state, behind a table covered with great packages of papers and loose manuscripts, and presenting altogether a decided business-like appearance. His chair was so located that the lawyer had a view of the visitor from the moment he entered the

room, and every movement and feature of the intruder were exposed to the merciless examination of those great gray orbs which looked out from beneath their bushy covers in a way that failed not to suggest the idea of beasts of prey in their lair. On the opposite side of the table was a well-worn client's chair ; so that between the anxious seeker after legal erudition and the attorney was a formidable barrier of documentary matter, across which the man of law was accustomed to gaze with dignified and awful gravity, his eyes speaking when his lips were sealed.

Into this inner room, in the year 18—, a young man was ushered by Tully, who, that duty performed, took his station behind his master's chair to await orders, and where his presence was quite overlooked. The visitor had the exterior of a gentleman of the peculiar Southern type, or what has long been recognized as such. His apparel was faultlessly fashionable, but carelessly worn ; his manner confident and aristocratic, but marred by swagger ; his countenance handsome and distinguished, but exhibiting evidences of fast living. He was clearly “somebody,” for on his entrance—a most unusual thing —Lawyer Anthony rose from his chair and stepped quite round to the clients' side of the table, warmly greeting the new-comer, and inviting him to a seat. Having politely inquired after his health, the attorney proceeded, in a most unprofessional way, to refer to a subject concerning which a person of his standing might be presumed to be profoundly ignorant.

“Glad to see you looking so well, Grandaville, after yesterday's excitement ! Fine race, wasn't it ? Must have damaged your pocket something, though ; as I think I saw you staking on the losing nag. I sometimes attend, but never bet.”

Grandaville, or the person addressed by that name, did not appear altogether to relish the subject introduced, replying rather evasively, and changing it as soon as he could with reasonable politeness.

"I have some business in your line, Mr. Anthony," he said.

"Ah!" rejoined the lawyer, settling himself back in his chair, and putting on his professional look. "I am yours to command for anything in my profession, prepared to render the most conscientious service."

"I want no conscientious service," replied Grandaville bluntly. "I want help in a matter in which conscience is out of the question—in fact a piece of downright rascality."

"You—you astonish me, Mr. Grandaville!" began Anthony with an air of offended dignity, making a movement as if to rise. "What do you take—"

"I take you for a lawyer—no worse than the majority of your profession—and no better. Pray don't be disturbed. I don't propose to question your honesty, except by assuming that your practice—professionally, I mean—has an honest side and a rascally side. I want the benefit of its rascally side: that's all."

To this plain statement, the attorney making no reply, perhaps because he had none that was satisfactory to make, Grandaville continued:

"You need not be alarmed. My business will require nothing at your hands worse than your action in the case of the Bolton heirs, and the Moffatt insolvency settlement, and probably a half-dozen other cases I could mention upon a little reflection."

"It is unnecessary, Mr. Grandaville," responded the lawyer coldly, "that you enter upon a review of my professional career. I flatter myself that it presents nothing

I need be ashamed of. I will assist you, if I can. But let me know now whether you want merely my professional services, and the responsibility of the business, whatever it may be, is to be yours."

"I want you to act solely as a lawyer, Mr. Anthony. All responsibility otherwise shall be mine."

"That quite alters the case. We lawyers, Mr. Grandaville, are often required to do things professionally at which our consciences, if we were acting in any other capacity, would rebel. You see the difference, I suppose?"

"I-can't-say-that-I-do, but I am no lawyer, and consequently not versed in lawyer's ethics. But that's your affair, not mine."

"Well, well; state your case."

"I wish to deceive a young lady——"

"Young gentlemen do not generally need the help of a lawyer to do that," interrupted the counsellor with a comic expression of countenance that was the caricature of a smile.

"Into the belief," continued Grandaville, without seeming to notice either the lawyer's remark or the tone of levity in which it was spoken, "that a certain thing is legally accomplished, when, in fact, nothing of the kind is intended."

"A sham marriage! You do not mean——"

"Nothing of the kind. Listen. The affair is this: I am about to marry a young lady who is the owner in law of a valuable lot of negroes which she has derived through the will of a relative. The negroes she wants to set free, which, by the terms of the will, she can only do upon attaining a certain age; unless before that time she marries, when she can do so at once with her husband's co-operation. Before she will consent to the marriage being solemnized, she insists upon some legal document

which will work the negroes' manumission—a sacrifice which I, as her intended husband, cannot afford to make. Now you see the point. What I want is something to satisfy the lady—something on its face appearing to accomplish what she requires, but which in law will be of no earthly account. That's my plan. You are a good enough lawyer, I take it, to prepare a document that will answer my purpose."

"O! is that all? Not such a diabolical plot after all. A young, romantic female, with certain silly, philanthropic fancies in her head, which she has obtained from novels, or other equally mischievous books, of which there are entirely too many in circulation, wants to do an unreasonable and indefensible act, which you propose to prevent by the use of a little legal strategy. A clear case of justifiable deception unquestionably, looking to the greatest ultimate good of yourself, the lady and the negroes. I can see no harm in it."

"That would be a very good way to put it, Mr. Anthony, if you were addressing a jury of twelve men who did not know their own minds. Your argument, however, is wasted on me. My mind's made up. I can see nothing in the affair, I am perfectly ready to admit, but base and cowardly knavery, to which I resort only because it is a case of absolute financial necessity."

"Before I can give you any assistance in the matter, Mr. Grandaville, I must have a copy of the will under which the lady in question holds title to the negroes," said the lawyer.

"So I supposed. There is the document."

With that Grandaville took a paper, folded into a package, from his pocket, and handed it across the table. The lawyer took the paper, opened it, threw himself back in his chair, crossed his feet upon the table with his heels

on a level with his nose, and proceeded deliberately to read.

The document proved to be a copy of the last will and testament of Howard Mathewson, deceased, regularly probated in the proper court. It began pretty much in the usual way. After stating his belief in the goodness and mercy of the Supreme Being, whose loving-kindness he expected to enjoy in the life beyond the grave, the testator went on to declare that he had accumulated a considerable property as the result of many years of patient toil, the greater portion of which consisted of negro slaves ; that he had reason to believe that his relatives, who would be his heirs-at-law, the majority of whom resided in New England, whence he had emigrated years before, were imbued with the false and abominable heresy of abolitionism ; and he feared that, in case his slaves passed into their hands, the accumulations which had cost him so much exertion and industry would be sacrificed to an execrable fanaticism. He, therefore, bequeathed all his estate, real, personal and mixed, including his slaves, to Isabella, infant daughter and only child of his oldest and best friend, Ferdinand Castellos, and issue of his marriage with Juliana Castellos, deceased, cousin in the fourth degree to the testator, knowing the mind of the devisee to be yet too immature to have received any erroneous impressions on the subject of owning and holding slaves. To provide against the contingency of the said Isabella acquiring false notions on that subject, whereby the evil which he deprecated might follow, it was directed that she should have no control over the slaves bequeathed, to manumit or otherwise dispose of them, their issue and increase, until she had attained to the age of twenty-four years—at which time of life it was to be presumed she would have outlived any foolish

and unsubstantial opinions she might before that time have imbibed. Provided, however, that if she married before reaching that age, she could at any time thereafter dispose of the negroes with the consent and co-operation of her husband, who would be presumed to supply the judgment she might lack ; and in case of marriage, such consent and co-operation should always thereafter be necessary.

Ferdinand Castellos, father of the beneficiary, in consequence of the faith reposed in his judgment and soundness of views on all questions by the testator, was appointed to execute the will, and specially charged with its faithful performance.

After having carefully read the document to the end, the lawyer elevated his eyes and suffered them to rest for a considerable time upon the ceiling ; then, turning to Grandaville, he said : “Of course the young lady is not yet twenty-four years of age ?”

“But little more than twenty.”

“Hum ! hum ! I see. Then if she marries at present, without an ante-nuptial agreement securing the freedom of the negroes, for which the marriage might possibly be a sufficient consideration in law, she forever puts it out of her power, except with her husband’s concurrence, to carry out her philanthropic intentions.”

“Precisely,” responded Grandaville. “You have now reached the point to which I have all along been directing your attention. I wish to persuade the young lady that, in marrying me, she is accomplishing the liberation of the slaves several years sooner than will otherwise be possible ; when, in fact, she will forever be putting it out of her control, and so making her object absolutely unattainable. Can it be accomplished through such a document as I suggested ?”

"I see no great difficulty," replied the lawyer, "in framing an instrument which would seem to secure the freedom of the negroes, and at the same time be so directly in conflict with the statutes of the State concerning the regulation of slave property as to be absolutely void; but I can see one or two possible difficulties in making it accomplish your purpose. In the first place there is the father of the girl, and the executor of the will. Should he at all sympathise with the peculiar views of his daughter, and be disposed to see them respected, he might be very seriously in the way."

"No fears on that score," observed Grandaville. "Ferdinand Castellos is a weak, indolent old man, who is only anxious to have the marriage over, that the trouble and responsibility of his daughter's affairs may be off his hands. He is no more to be apprehended than a child."

"Then there is the girl. Some women, particularly if they happen to be strong-minded, as the possession of such peculiar ideas as she entertains would indicate your affianced to be, are a match for any lawyer, and I verily believe for the devil himself."

"Isabella Castellos," replied Grandaville, "is not of that kind. She is a pure-minded, noble-hearted girl; so incapable of deceit herself, as never to suspect it in others. This scheme for the emancipation of the negroes is the irresistible outgrowth of her generous nature. If there ever was an angel, she is one. By heavens! Anthony, this is a vile business altogether—a piece of scoundrelism which can only be tolerated on the score of the direst necessity!"

"The responsibility, you know, is your own," observed the lawyer, in response to this outburst, with a reproachful expression of countenance, such as the virtuous judge

might be expected to wear in passing sentence upon the convicted criminal.

"I know it," replied Grandaville, "and I'm ashamed that it is so. Its altogether too bad that such an honest, loveable creature as she is should have anything to do with such a villain as I'm compelled to be ; but that is not my lookout. The property is what I am after and must have, or I'm a ruined man. When can you have the paper ready ? "

"To-morrow, by this hour."

"I will come for it myself. Good day."

"Good day, Mr. Grandaville."

CHAPTER II.

BY WAY OF PREPARATION.



MERICAN society is, necessarily, patchwork. Homogeneousness, under the circumstances of its creation—organization it can scarcely be said to have—could not be looked for.

Made up of little by little from nearly all portions of the habitable globe, the lines that have resulted from the union of the parts—those seams which a composite fabric must have, if the simile first introduced is to be continued—have not had time to disappear.

That the combination of nationalities thus formed is superior to any of the parts separately considered, I believe to be a proposition established by the verdict of acknowledged results. Philosophise as the advocates of the Old World's social systems may upon the danger of combining representatives of different peoples and different classes in a community of equal privileges, the experiment, as tried in our own country, testifies powerfully, if not conclusively, in its favor. Who that has studied the effect with tolerable candor will deny either its actual practicability or its elevating tendency? How far the practice may be safely and profitably carried, when color enters as an element, time must determine; but the principle is assured.

In a society like ours, the stereotyped notions of older communities that are founded upon the ordering or the accident of birth, scarcely exist. Such a thing as the “family” is hardly known among American institutions.

An ancestry is not looked for ; and blood itself—that most sacred of all possessions in some people's eyes—is accepted as it comes, as a thing to be neither remarkably proud nor ashamed of. With us, generation succeeds to generation, not so much like one link in a chain to another, as like the annual yield of the soil to that of the preceding season. Each is an independent production, to be measured or weighed according to its abundance or quality.

No man in America takes a position by inheritance. His father's mantle is buried with his father's person. Instead of the name of an ancestor bearing its possessor, as a boat in the water bears its occupant, it is more often received and carried as the traveller bears his pack. It is sometimes a burden—rarely a help. Ancestral fame, consequently, in our market is a thing which neither makes nor breaks. It is a commodity without a valuation. The blood of a family here, so far from flowing through generations as a brooklet pursues its way through successive meadows, as in the Old World, resembles rather a mountain torrent—sometimes expanding into broad sunlit basins, and sometimes rushing boisterously through narrow and crooked gorges quite overshadowed by mountain and forest. The result is, that society is forever in a transition state. It reminds us of those boiling springs which are perpetually reversing the order of their particles. In the everlasting ebullition going forward, involving the constant interchanging of the parts, it would be supposed that the course of individual drops would soon be lost sight of, and the entire mass become indissolubly blended. Such is the case, to a certain extent, undoubtedly ; but is there no exception ?

In America, it is said, the question of a man's origin rarely affects either his social or his business standing,

beyond the influence it may have upon his own character. Yet it is the purpose of the writer of these pages to relate a story, purely American in its incidents, which will depend for its interest chiefly upon distinctions and prejudices founded upon an inheritance of blood. Nor are the conditions it will be found to involve either occasional or exceptional. No more common or powerful sentiment than the one upon which they rest is known among a people proverbially positive in both likes and dislikes. And what will be found to make the story more extraordinary is the fact that the distinctions upon which its leading incidents are to turn—although the author does not write with any purpose of enforcing a dogma—are distinctions of caste, not of merit.

There is an exception, therefore, and one so marked and potential that its effect has often been to bring upon inoffensive men, if not the best in the community, the contempt and persecution of the worst, upon no other ground than a difference in birth. To the intelligent reader it is scarcely necessary to explain that the exception which is so novel in its features and pronounced in its results, involves the question of color.

I need only appeal to the black man, whose blood is wholly of African descent, to prove how much of a load he was born to carry with him through life under the shadow of American democracy. It is not necessary that he should have felt the weight of legal servitude, to which the majority of his race in this country have been exposed, to realize the merciless, cutting discrimination to which the accident of parentage has doomed him. He has learned what it is to be socially accursed. He has found that to be black is worse than to be criminal. The seal which Heaven, in its inscrutable foreordination, has set

upon his brow is more terrible than the mark of Cain. His lot is one admitting of no alleviation. Guilty of no crime, he can make no condonation. Born to a social ostracism which has had no inception in reason, and which is infinitely more galling than physical slavery, he soon discovers there is no ransom for color. All his life long must he journey beneath a cloud deadlier than the night-shade.

Nor does the trial end with death. The grave, which is supposed to be the receptacle of all mortal sorrows, gives him no assurance of relief; for full well does he know that the life he leaves behind him in the souls and bodies of his children is to be a continuation of the same unequal struggle—the same remorseless, reasonless proscription. What more cruel torture to any reflective being than the bitter knowledge that he must deny himself the consolations of family and home, or transmit, as an interminable curse, an inheritance of shame to the innocent issue of his blood?

But there is still a greater sufferer. Would you know who he is? Seek out the person whose skin shows merely the trace of African kinship—less than the mulatto's—the Octoroon, or possibly one with not even so much of the fatal contamination, and his experience will advise you. Such an one is compelled to bear not merely the full weight of odium attaching to negro origin, but he has superadded a harrowing sense of personal injustice. He feels that his rightful place is with his brothers and sisters of the favored race, to which the preponderance of his blood allies him, even as he finds himself forced back to the ranks of the proscribed to whom he bears the slightest relationship. He is permitted to enter the gates of Paradise, but to partake of none of its sweets. Could there be anything more galling than the

existence he leads? Whatever his aspirations, he can make no progress towards a higher social station. He dare not raise his eyes in the spirit of honorable love to one whose blood may be but a particle purer than his own, however powerfully his heart may be stirred; and as for his sister or his daughter, though her soul may be as stainless as a seraph's, she cannot receive the smile of one whose birth has been a trifle happier than her own—even while love laughs at the distinctions of social caste—save at the sacrifice of all that honor holds dear and virtue sacred. A single drop of blood may be all that separates them, but that single drop is as formidable as if it were an ocean. That one fatal particle taints the whole life current from the fountain to the grave. Society never forgets nor forgives it. While the crucible of an intense democracy goes on melting and mingling the contributions of nearly all lands, blending them with a harmony which has excited the world's profoundest admiration, no sooner does that one forbidden portion enter the solution than the whole becomes a chaotic, worthless mass, to be rejected with infinite scorn.

And why? Is it because color is naturally offensive to the white man's tastes? If so, we might look for the prejudice to be as wide-spread as the blood of the Caucasian, and all races, whose skins are darker than his own, to share proportionably in his dislike. So far from such being the case, however, in the majority of countries where men of lighter shades predominate, the African meets with no repulse on account of his complexion; and, even in America, the native Indian, whose skin is nearly as dark, and whose character is immeasurably inferior, is often the object of a romantic admiration. The origin of the antipathy I have described as so harsh in its animosities and so exceptional in its practice, is

undoubtedly traceable to the influence of an institution which was itself an exception in the system of government under which it prevailed. Founded upon the idea that property could exist in man, that institution, for its own justification, was forced to teach the doctrine of the inherent inferiority of the race upon whose degradation it built its strength. Although the institution itself has passed away, it has left its impression, like an unseemly scar, upon the American mind in one of the most deeply-seated prejudices the world has ever known, or can know.

As the reader is to witness the workings of that prejudice in the incidents which are to fill the following pages, he will not be surprised when I invite him to a field in which, more than anywhere else in this country, it has had its most striking illustration. Nowhere within the United States might the antipathy of race to race, on account of color, be expected to be less violent than in the State of Louisiana ; and especially in the city of New Orleans, at a period prior to the late Rebellion. That city, besides having a population of a more than ordinarily miscellaneous description, possessed a large African element, and while many of its colored residents were slaves, a no inconsiderable portion were free, and embraced a fair representation of wealth and educational refinement. Were the negroes, on that account, treated with more consideration than elsewhere ? Alas, no ! as many a man—free, intelligent and proud-spirited—could testify when silently smarting under an indignity from one of the lowest of the dominant race on account of his complexion ; and which he dared not for his life resent ; as many a woman—virtuous, beautiful and accomplished—could tearfully confirm who had learned from sad experience that, spite of the graces of person, the endowments of intellect,

and the attractions of external wealth, an inherited stigma, of which she had ever to wear the evidence upon her brow, entailing a curse seemingly as ineradicable as that visited upon our first parents, was forever to seal against her the gates of society's adorable Paradise.

CHAPTER III.

THE MASTER AND HIS PLANTATION.

“**T**O be sure I will ! Nothing could give me greater pleasure than to bear you company. Thanks, many thanks for your kind——”

“Then let us be off.”

With this unceremonious check to the voluble flow of his companion’s thankfulness, drawn out in response to an invitation which had clearly been received with greater satisfaction than it had been given, the last speaker arose and strode from the room. The first speaker, nothing daunted by the other’s manner, if indeed he noticed it at all, after standing in pleased contemplation for a few moments before a large mirror, followed in the best of humor, and was soon by his side. Arm-in-arm the two men proceeded down the street, until lost to view in the hurrying crowd.

Before undertaking to follow their footsteps, I shall embrace the opportunity of more formally introducing the persons, of whom a glimpse has thus been given, to my readers. The one first to leave the room, whose speech and manner were abrupt almost to incivility, is not altogether a stranger, being no other than the Grandaville who appears in the introductory chapter of this volume. Some idea of the man can be had from his conversation, as given there ; but as he is to bear a leading part in the incidents hereafter to be related, a brief sketch of his history, with a passing reference to some prominent points in his character, may not here be amiss.

He is manifestly the elder of the two men just brought to the reader's notice. Precisely his age it would be difficult to tell, because of the uncertain effect of indulgence in the more popular dissipations of the day, of which his countenance furnishes too conclusive evidence. A certain maturity of expression is, likewise, incident to a positiveness of disposition, of the existence of which, in his case, no judge of physiognomy could be mistaken. The first impression of the man is by no means wholly a disagreeable one. As in all faces of commanding presence, for such his strikingly is, perfect regularity of feature is not to be found. His brow is too square, and the lower portion of the face too massive, and, it must be added, too sensual, for thorough symmetry, but the effect is not inconsistent with good looks. If there is nothing about it positively to admire, there is something which no one would fail to observe, and from which it would be found difficult to withdraw the eye. It is one of those faces we occasionally encounter, that at once rivet attention, although we cannot tell why. There is nothing about them we can exactly describe, and yet we single them out in the midst of the largest assemblages, and dwell upon them in practical forgetfulness of the many by which they are surrounded. We do not stop to inquire what the attraction is; we simply know that our attention has been fixed by the presence of a hidden, perhaps mysterious, power.

In person, the subject of our sketch is rather over the average height, and admirably proportioned. His figure is faultless, whatever may be said of his face. Grace and strength have been so combined in the physical man that neither is sacrificed to the other.

Ruy Grandaville—for that is the name in full—is the descendant of an old (three generations) and honorable

family in his native city of New Orleans. What society calls "good blood" was in it at the time of its transfer to American soil. Report went so far as to say that it was a slip from the nobility of France, from which country it came—sent over to the New World to take its chances of securing a root-hold, the parent vine probably not caring whether it lived or died. Spite of the strangeness of the field, it lived and flourished with tolerable vigor. The great grandfather and his son and immediate successor, the first and second representatives of the family in its new location, had been men of more than ordinary character, as appeared in the fact that they had laid the foundation for a considerable estate. The third in the descending line, the father of Ruy, was a person of quite another sort. Of easy and indolent disposition, he had made but little exertion to add to his inherited possessions, and his few feeble efforts in that direction invariably led to unfortunate conclusions. He was generous and sociable, and rightfully esteemed an excellent citizen, but in all matters of business he had been what Americans denominate a "failure." The result was that the property he inherited, sufficient, with proper management, to have insured a princely fortune, constantly diminished in his hands. Appearances had undergone no change, it was true. A reputation for wealth was still maintained ; but debts had gradually accumulated, represented by mortgages and debentures, which were slowly eating the substance away. Exposure and ruin were simply questions of time. The representative of that generation, however, was to escape humiliation ; as he died in time to anticipate the crash in his affairs, leaving behind him the name of a rich man, and very little besides.

To Ruy, the heir, descended the wreck. There was even then, in the hands of a competent business man,

substance enough to have realized a comfortable property ; but, like American fortunes generally, being left to the operation of natural laws, the Grandaville estate, having passed the periods of healthy growth and maturity, was fulfilling that of a sure decline. The vegetable productions of the country are not more certain to ripen—and, having ripened, to enter upon a season of decadence—than the wealth which has been gathered by the enterprise of one or more generations, when it reaches the hands of reckless and extravagant heirs. The competition of poor men's sons, fresh, sharp and eager, is fatal to their possession.

Ruy had capacity enough, had his abilities been turned in the right direction, to have held his own against all competitors ; but his case was no exception to the general rule. He had not only some of his father's weaknesses, but positive vices besides. The greatest of these was an acquired fondness for gaming. Considerable sums of money had been dissipated in his father's time among dissolute companions, and when he came into possession of what he at first supposed to be an independent property, it was to give loose rein to his extravagance. When the truth appeared, as it soon did, that but a narrow margin lay between him and bankruptcy, that fact, instead of inducing reform and a prudent husbandry of resources, made him the more desperate in his ventures. He reasoned that the easiest and speediest way to restore his broken fortunes was to employ his skill with cards as a means of pecuniary accumulation, and, as a consequence, played more deeply than before ; although the indulgence of his evil propensity was the real motive for his conduct. Hence there was no check in his downward career.

It is not to be inferred that, during all this time, he was

publicly numbered with professional gamblers, although such men were his daily companions. No young man held a higher position in good society. As the representative of an old and wealthy family, his name was the “open sesame” to the most fashionable houses ; particularly as the public knew very little of the real condition of his pecuniary affairs. The public, in such cases, never does know anything until ruin comes. It had never entered into the imagination of that stupidest of bodies, as among the possibilities, that the heir of the Grandavilles could be near the brink of vulgar beggary.

Besides, fashionable society, in such cases, is not inquisitive. If the exterior be fair, it does not want to look beyond and beneath. Being of the surface—superficial itself, it is not favorable to close examination. It hates surprises, and accepts the thinnest evidence of respectability—veneer, paint or gilding, if passably laid on, as all-sufficient for its idols. Its rule is to take things—and men are things in its eyes—as they seem, not as they are. The man was well born, well bred, well dressed and well received, and what more did it need ?

Whispers there were, to be sure, that all was not right, and sober heads were sometimes shaken when rumors of Ruy’s questionable courses obtained circulation, as they occasionally did. But what cared society if he did play cards and lose money, as men of wealth and fashion were accustomed to do, and had a right to do, as long as it was understood to be merely for amusement. That consideration raised him quite above the class of men who played professionally, and with whom he played. It is astonishing how long people—fashionable people, I mean—can cheat themselves with such a distinction. Had it been publicly known that Ruy, though a Grandaville, was gaming with a view to making, instead of losing,

money ; and that he looked to his winnings as a means of supporting vulgar existence, his position would have been gone at once. He then would have been nothing more than a gambler—the lowest scape-grace in the social scale.

There were two other reasons why the tongue of scandal was cautious in Ruy's case.

One was that he was a most fascinating companion, and personally popular. He had really some good qualities. He was courteous, sociable and generous to a fault, not merely with his own means, but towards others' weaknesses. He could do a kind action from an honest, though not lasting, impulse. He was extravagant, but he did not merely throw his money away ; some one was profited by his folly. When occasion required, nobody could exhibit a more splended turn-out, or give a more charming supper. He was what the free-and-easy world—which extends from the highest fashionable heaven down to the lowest social pandemonium—delighted to pronounce a “capital fellow.” He consequently had friends who, if not valued for their affection, were dreaded for their enmity.

The other reason was, that he was a dead shot. While no one accused him of being quarrelsome, no one doubted either his skill or his courage. He had figured in several “affairs,” and had killed his man—an individual who had been celebrated as a duellist. A person whose reputation is thus guarded, is not one to be lightly talked about.

Thus did Ruy manage to float along ; but with both vices and his virtues conspiring to make him prodigal of his means, it is no wonder that the remnant of property his father had left him rapidly disappeared. One portion of the estate after another had been parted with, until, at

the time our story opens, nothing of the once great landed property the Grandavilles had owned in the city of New Orleans remained. Even the old homestead, the house in which both Ruy and his father before him had been born, was sold. Absolutely nothing was left of his inheritance except one plantation, located at a point some distance from the city, to which the family had, in former years, on account of its healthful situation, been accustomed to go during the summer months. Something there was about that plantation which made its spendthrift owner cling to it with unyielding tenacity. No difference how urgent his pecuniary necessities, he would neither consent to part with its title nor suffer any encumbrance upon it. For some reason it was sacred in his eyes.

Of his plantation Ruy would often speak, and his frequent reference to it may have assisted in keeping up the illusion of his wealth. But whatever the explanation of its owner's conduct, of the existence of that one remaining fragment of the Grandaville estate there could be no doubt. "Massa Ruy's Plantation" was not only a fact, but before I have finished my narrative, the reader will be acquainted both with its location and the secret of its value in its master's eyes.

CHAPTER IV.

FRIEND AND VICTIM.

HE other party brought to the reader's notice in the last chapter, was Grandaville's opposite in almost every respect ; younger, if appearances were trustworthy, by several years, and in comparison but indifferently qualified to be reckoned a man of the world.

Edmund Solorgne, the scion of a wealthy house in Southern France, of which country he was a native, had been sent to New Orleans, partly to acquire a knowledge of the world by foreign travel, and partly to look after the collection of certain claims there owing to the firm of which his father was the head. It was his misfortune, immediately upon his arrival, to be thrown into the society of Ruy Grandaville, and to pass almost without restriction under his influence. For this there was partial apology in the fact that the young man had brought letters to Ruy from his father in France, who had for years been a business correspondent of the elder Grandavilles, and held an exalted opinion of the honor and integrity of the family, earnestly beseeching him to take an interest in his son. But, without such introduction, the characters of the two men were such that, once having met, they would almost inevitably have attached themselves to each other with the same result. And yet two persons would rarely be encountered with seemingly so little in common. There was not a single point in which they appeared to correspond. While one was resolute, bold and exacting,

the other was frivolous, timid, and the plaything of men of stronger wills than his own. Physically the same dissimilarity was apparent. Solorgne, in person, was the exact illustration of the inner man. His form was graceful, but effeminate ; his features regular, but wanting in expression ; and his weight scarcely up to the ordinary standard. His entire demeanor was such as to convey an impression of immaturity.

It was by no means the first instance that individuals as radically dissimilar have been strongly attached to each other ; but here there was at least one bond of fellowship. Both were fond of pleasure, and both inclined to seek it in such pursuits as furnished the largest measure of excitement. Solorgne was not long in arriving at the conclusion that Grandaville was an accomplished leader in those dissipations in which he, above all things, was ambitious to excel ; the more so as he felt how formidable his own lack of experience and courage stood in the way of success ; and his admiration grew accordingly. Ere long he had become, not only the ardent friend and the constant companion, but the servile imitator, almost worshipper, of his older and more capable associate.

Grandaville, whatever may have been his real opinion of the unsophisticated, luckless youth, encouraged the companionship. He was not long in discovering that it could be made a source of advantage to himself. Solorgne commanded an abundant supply of money, and was ready to spend it freely in the indulgence of his foibles and tastes. Rarely did the friends meet to pass an hour together without cards being proposed to lighten the time, terminating invariably in Grandaville being the richer and Solorgne the poorer—a result which seemed to afford more satisfaction to the loser than to the gainer. When, as he sometimes did, Grandaville would protest against

taking his companion's money, as they were friends playing merely for amusement, Solorgne would resent such disinterestedness with a warmth that speedily silenced all denial. At the next meeting he was certain to insist upon larger stakes, and would play with greater recklessness than was his wont.

The two men became almost inseparable. Not a day passed which did not bring them together. Solorgne went as regularly to Grandaville's apartments as to his own. On the morning on which they are first seen by the reader, the young Frenchman, at an earlier hour than usual, had sought his friend to consult about the amusements of the day. His disappointment may be imagined when informed by Grandaville that their separation for that day was unavoidable, as he was compelled to be absent from the city. But when told that his friend's destination was the plantation of which he had heard him so often speak, and to which Grandaville informed him he was called by urgent business, he took heart, and insisted that that circumstance need not work their separation, as nothing would afford him so much pleasure as the privilege of visiting the plantation referred to, in company with its master. His companionship, thus tendered, could not have been rejected without a degree of rudeness that must have been fatal to their friendship. Grandaville was compelled, in consequence, to extend the invitation to his friend to join him in his contemplated journey, which led to the acceptance and response to be found at the outset of the last chapter.

But while I have been supplying these preliminaries, the men have passed quite out of our sight. Let us hasten to overtake them.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE ROAD.

STARTING in pursuit of the two friends, so fully introduced in previous chapters, we have several blocks to go, leading us quite out of the more fashionable streets, before we are able to overtake them. They have stopped, as we come up, before a large, low, barn-like structure, over the principal entrance of which is a sign announcing an establishment where horses and vehicles are to be had for hire. Leaving his companion on the sidewalk, Grandaville entered for the two-fold purpose of ordering out his own horse and selecting one for his friend; for the journey they were about to undertake had to be made in the saddle. A choice having been made to his satisfaction, he returned to the street.

A colored man soon appeared leading a graceful and high-mettled animal, his eye flashing and his teeth champing the bit. No sooner did he notice Grandaville than he set up a sharp, cheerful neigh of recognition, and began to rear and plunge, swinging his attendant from side to side with a degree of violence which threatened each moment to prove too much for his control. Grandaville stepped forward, and with a kindly word and a few gentle strokes of the hand speedily quieted the restless brute, until he stood, although still tremulous with excitement, in graceful, pleased submission—a picture of satisfied obedience.

Soon another horse was led forth. The second animal

was of quite a different order. A heavy, lumbering beast, with a dull eye and an excess of flesh, he appeared much better suited for the shafts of the market-man's cart than for the saddle. Solorgne was no judge of a roadster, and so proceeded to place himself, without protest, upon the back of the clumsy brute, as Grandaville's steed was already pawing the ground in impatience to be off.

The road selected led the travellers into the depths of one of those great swampy regions lying contiguous to the city of New Orleans. A more uninteresting country to the eye, and one more wearisome to the traveller, could hardly be conceived of. Solorgne soon found his experience very different from the entertainment he had anticipated. Owing to the opposite qualities of the animals they were riding, for the most of the time he and his companion were so far apart as to make conversation extremely difficult, if not impossible. The separation, he began to suspect, was not altogether unintentional on Grandaville's part. He noticed that there was a cloud upon his fellow-traveller's brow and an irritableness in his manner which he was wholly unable to account for ; and that his friend was really desirous, for some unknown and incomprehensible reason, of escaping his society, was the conclusion that gradually forced itself upon his mind. A feeling of vexation, not altogether unmixed with resentment, sprang up in his own bosom in consequence. It was the first unpleasant sensation that had occurred to disturb the cordiality of the two men.

But, meanwhile, Solorgne was encountering other trials that severely taxed his equanimity. The day was warm, and the unaccustomed exercise of the saddle more and more wore upon his strength and spirits. Heartily did he wish himself back in the city, and nothing but his

pride prevented him from returning. The indignation which the seeming churlishness of Grandaville had excited, determined him to persevere at every hazard. He was not willing to do that which he believed would gratify his friend. His disposition had its full share of the obstinacy of weak men.

So, between petulance on the one hand, and a motive that events had not yet made clear on the other, the men, whose intercourse had always been most intimate before, rode forward in silence and apart, although with no great space between them, each busy with his own thoughts.

The middle hour of the day had already passed when Grandaville, who happened at the time to be some distance in advance, drew rein upon coming in sight of a clearing in the heavy forest through which they were passing, the principal feature of which was a cabin constructed of unhewn logs.

A more forbidding spot could scarcely be imagined. The clearing had been made by in part deadening the great trees of native growth, which were left standing to decay and fall piece-meal, in their own time, to the earth. The low, rakish log structure, which was the central figure in the scene, consisted of two originally independent cribs, which had been so connected together by the extension of one roof over them as to leave an uninclosed covered space between. In this shed were collected agricultural implements, harness, saddles, and seemingly all the utensils and trumpery belonging to the establishment. The ground, which had been partially improved, was a sort of elevation in the midst of a swamp, evidences of which were to be seen all around. The swamp forest on every side was a compact mass of foliage, almost black in its sombreness, except where long patches of grayish moss hung trailing from the branches of the trees. That

human beings could be induced, voluntarily, to dwell in such a place, seemed a mystery past comprehension.

"Is that your plantation?" asked Solorgne, as he approached Grandaville, who was waiting for him to come up.

The tone in which the question was conveyed might indicate either surprise or a disposition to affront.

"We stop here for the present," was Grandaville's indifferent reply.

The prospect of rest, even in such a place, was a relief to the sore and weary Frenchman, and he, therefore, gave no further sign of dissatisfaction.

A half-dozen dogs, of as many sizes and degrees of repulsiveness, having by this time discovered the travellers, set up a chorus of most inharmonious sounds.

The alarm being thus given, instantly as it seemed, as if by the operation of some such internal machinery as is sometimes witnessed in doll residences, every door and window of the cabin had one or more heads pop out to stare upon the new-comers. They were all frowzy and unsightly enough, indicating a decided preponderance of the colored race.

One of the heads, which was chiefly distinguishable from the others by a mass of reddish hair and whiskers, standing out in all directions not unlike so much matted stubble, slowly advanced from the doorway until it was seen to rest upon the shoulders of a tall, muscular man. That he was a white person was to be inferred more from the color of the hair and the cast of the features, than from a complexion which was hardly visible through an accumulated deposit of apparently long standing. Head and feet were bare, and the only clothing enjoyed by the balance of the body consisted of shirt and pantaloons, both of undistinguishable original shade.

"Ruy Granderville, as I'm a sinner!" brawled the apparition, after taking a minute's deliberate survey of the travellers.

"Here Sam! here Pete! come an' git the hosses. Quick, yer lazy, sneakin', good-fur-nothin' niggers! Quick I say, or——Ah! how is yer anyhow, neighbor? Glad ter see yer, 'pon my soul! Come in an' take sumthin', won't yer?"

As he finished the last sentence, the speaker, who had stridden across the space between the cabin door and the road, seized Grandaville cordially by the hand.

"Thank you, Walker," replied Grandaville good-humoredly. "We will be glad to take some dinner with you. This is my friend Solorgne."

"Glad ter see yer, Mr. Cowshorn," exclaimed the man addressed as Walker, as he seized the Frenchman's hand and shook his arm as if it had been the handle to a pump. He then led the way to the cabin, turning at the door, however, to deliver a few more rough injunctions to the invisible Sam and Pete to expedite their attentions to the travellers' horses.

"Now, old gal, stir yerself, an' git sumthin' ter eat as quick as fire an' water'l do the bizness—an' yer, yer cus-sed, yaller-skinned varmints, out of this, every one ov yer! Git, I say!"

The beginning of the sentence was addressed to a middle aged, slatternly female, who was in whole, or principal part, of African lineage; and the conclusion to a bevy of wide-eyed, gaping and nearly naked children, the oldest, a naturally not uncomely girl well on to womanhood, whose tawny skins and kinking hair showed them to be a fair cross between the white head of the establishment and the woman just referred to.

Walker's commands were obeyed with a promptitude

that showed he enjoyed the respect, or what was probably a substitute for it, the fear of his household. The woman went about the preparation of a meal in a matter-of-course way, without so much as opening her lips ; and the children, driven from the cabin, filled the doorway with bushy, grinning heads, intent upon every movement of the strangers.

“ And now, gentlemen,” resumed the host, after seeing the visitors seated upon three-legged stools of home manufacture, “ won’t yer take sumthin’ after yer ride? Its mighty coolin’ ov a hot day.”

With that, and without waiting for an answer, Walker produced from beneath a bed in the room an earthen jug, and having poured some of the contents into a tin-cup, presented it to his guests—first to one and then the other, at the same time highly commending its cooling qualities, although the taste was almost that of aqua-fortis.

The visitors having, out of politeness, each taken the smallest possible sip of the fiery liquid, their entertainer emptied the cup at a draught, smacking his lips, after the self-bestowed treat, with manifest satisfaction.

Dinner over, Walker and his guests retired to the shade of a tree outside of the cabin, there to pass the time until the travellers’ horses would be sufficiently rested for a resumption of the journey. The three men seated themselves upon stools, and the children stood watching them intently at a safe distance. Grandaville produced a case of choice cigars, and passed them to his companions. Walker took one, but at the same time drawing a pipe of home manufacture from his pocket, crushed the fragrant Havana into it. Then, having crowned the mass with a living coal, which one of the children by his order brought from the cabin, he proceeded to smoke with great complacency.

As I shall have occasion, in the course of the succeeding narrative, more than once to visit the cabin of the man Walker, and as he was a fair representative of a considerable class of persons living in the slave-holding States at the period of which I am writing, I have not only given the foregoing details, but shall avail myself of the opportunity, while he is busy with his pipe, to acquaint the reader with certain facts concerning him and his household.

He had gone into the swamp to live, partly to escape social and legal restraint, and partly because he there found a home rent and tax free. In other words, he was a "squatter."

Although intellectually and morally not superior to the average of poor white men of the South, from whose ranks he had sprung, he enjoyed, at the time he is introduced to the acquaintance of the reader, one advantage which, in his own estimation at least, lifted him quite above the mass of his fellows. He was a slave-holder.

By some means he had acquired title to a colored woman of about his own age, and the result had been a family of children who, inheriting the legal condition of the mother, had come into the world the absolute property of their father. Walker failed not to realize the importance that fact gave him. No father could be more proud of his family than he, for his offspring were, in the most literal sense, his treasures, being estimated exactly according to their supposed market values. True, he had a sort of affection for his children; and so he would have had for horses and pigs of his own raising. But that fact never caused him to forget the important point that he was the owner of slave property. Of course, under such circumstances, there could be no more staunch be-

liever in, or ardent champion of, the system which secured him such valuable privileges.

Being a slave-holder, he looked upon himself as a gentleman. But while, for that reason, he did not scruple to meet the most refined with the freedom of assumed equality, he could not fail to notice that there was a wide, although to him incomprehensible, difference between himself and men who had been born and reared as gentlemen ; and on that account he was as slavishly sycophantic towards such persons as he was domineering to men of his real condition. Ruy Grandaville, being the finest gentleman he knew, was his highest conception of manhood ; and had he been born a negro, and led the life of a slave, he could not have been more ready to do his bidding.

“Buyin’ niggers ?”

The question was directed, or, what seemed nearer it, spit, at Solorgne.

Walker, given up to the luxury of his pipe, had for several minutes maintained an unbroken silence ; but during that time his eyes had rested upon the young Frenchman. From the latter’s somewhat stylish apparel, he had come to the conclusion that he must be a dealer in slaves, bearing in mind the flashy appearance of some specimens of the negro trading fraternity he had met. Hence had followed a train of reflection, partly induced by the presence of his children, which suggested the possibility of something in a business way. Accordingly, the pipe being taken from his lips, and a long stream of tobacco smoke having been blown out, the question above given followed with the suddenness of a pistol report.

So startled was Solorgne by the inquiry, that he could only answer with a look of amazement.

Grandaville came to the help of both parties by ex-

plaining to Walker that his companion was not a trader in slaves, being a resident of another country—of France.

“France! whar’s that?” asked the loquacious Walker.

Grandaville explained that it was on the other side of the ocean.

“Possible!” exclaimed the swamp squatter. “I never wus nowhar further’n Texas. But, Mr. Cowshorn, hasn’t yer got no niggers in—in what yer call the place yer belongs to?”

“Not as slaves,” replied Solorgne.

“Yer don’t say!” exclaimed the swamp squatter, looking commiseratively at the Frenchman. Then putting his pipe back between his teeth, and holding it there with one hand, he proceeded: “How does yer live thar, then?—(puff). Who does the work fur yer?—(puff). ’Twould be mighty little we’d do here if ’twarn’t fur the niggers—(puff, puff). They’re the bone an’ sinner—(puff)—the salt an’ sarce ov the country, they is—(puff, puff). Why, the hull of the work on this plantation—(puff)—an’ yer won’t see many nicer an’ more comfortable places—(puff)—is done by niggers—by that old woman of mine an’ them children—(puff, puff). Bless me! we’d starve here if ’twarn’t fur the niggers—(puff). They’re of no ‘count when they belongs ter theirselves—(puff)—but when they belongs ter the white folks, they’re the makin’ ov both on ’em.”

By this time the speaker had become so filled with smoke that he was compelled to suspend his discourse to blow off, complacently looking round, as he performed that operation, upon his property, human and otherwise.

Solorgne was neither an abolitionist nor the opposite. He did not feel that he had any interest in the slavery question; so, wishing to escape another volley of the

swamp philosopher's political economy, which he saw was imminent, on the plea of extreme fatigue he left his seat and stretched himself upon the grass. Not in the least disconcerted, Walker took the vacated stool and set it between himself and Grandaville. Then, taking a pack of greasy cards from some place about his person, he laid them upon the stool with a challenge to play, which was good-naturedly accepted. Solorgne dimly saw the two men handling the cards, and the next moment was sound asleep.

When he awoke, he was surprised and startled to perceive from the lengthened shadows that he had slept for several hours. He was about to spring to his feet, with an apology upon his lips, when something in the conversation between Grandaville and Walker, who, cards in hand, occupied the same position in which he had last seen them, arrested his attention and his intended movement at the same time.

"You now understand why I have gone so much out of my way," said Grandaville.

"Sartin I does, an' the nixt time ——"

Walker was prevented from finishing the sentence by a significant motion from Grandaville, who had discovered Solorgne's return to consciousness—a motion, however, which the latter noticed as well.

Once upon his feet, Solorgne began to express his regrets at the delay he had unintentionally occasioned ; but was told that, the evening being preferable for travelling, no inconvenience would result. But now, the sun being low in the west, Grandaville announced that they must be again upon the move. Accordingly Sam and Pete were directed to bring the horses ; the travellers were soon in the saddle ; and, after being warmly pressed to partake of that "sumthin'" which Walker protested "wus fust rate

to keep the blood warm ov a cool night," they bade their host good-by.

The balance of the journey was simply a repetition of the morning's experience. No attempt at sociability was made. The travellers pursued their way, generally with a considerable space between them, busy with their own reflections. Solorgne was indulging an unusually—for him—sober train of thought. The fragment of conversation he had overheard between Grandaville and Walker led him to recall numerous minor incidents of the morning, tending to show that his friend had, on that day, been totally unlike his former self. That there was something about the plantation they were on their way to visit which was the cause of the phenomenon, strongly impressed itself upon his mind. What could be the mystery? He resolved, while concealing his own suspicions, and avoiding everything that would arouse his friend's, to possess himself, if possible, of the secret.

Day had disappeared, and the second hour of the night had well nigh passed, when Solorgne became aware that his companion, who had been riding in advance, had stopped in the road and was waiting for him to come up.

"The plantation," said Grandaville, upon Solorgne's approach. The latter looked in the direction indicated, and, sure enough, at a short distance from the road the outlines of a large building were plainly distinguishable through the darkness.

A halloo from the proprietor had the effect of producing a decided commotion. The dogs began the alarm, but their clamor was speedily drowned by the shouts of an excited negro population that came rushing in a body towards the travellers, who found themselves surrounded by an indistinguishable collection of men, women, children and dogs, all exerting their vocal powers to the

utmost. Grandaville sternly commanded silence, and a few cuts of his riding-whip, judiciously administered, secured prompt obedience. A lantern being brought, disclosed a circle of glistening eyes and teeth on the outer line of illumination, while the dusky bodies to which they belonged were scarcely visible in the darkness. The spectacle, to one witnessing it for the first time, was strangely weird and almost alarming. Solorgne could not suppress a shudder, and a presentiment of evil took possession of his mind, which he in vain struggled to expel. Mechanically he followed Grandaville towards the house.

Indoors, they were guided through a long, gloomy hall by a tall, slatternly negress, carrying a lamp whose light was just sufficient to betray a sable countenance staring at them from almost every doorway they passed. A house inhabited by ghouls could not have appeared more uninviting. It was not until the master's apartment had been reached, and the door closed behind the travellers, that the effect upon the visitor's mind began to wear off.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HIDDEN BEAUTY.



WONDERFUL change came over Grandaville as soon as he was under his own roof. At once his former freedom of manner returned. He seemed determined to make up in affability for his churlishness of the day. He ordered supper ; and, meanwhile, to take the edge from the fatigue they felt, as he expressed it, he directed wine to be brought which proved to be an article very different from the "sumthin'" Walker had lauded so extravagantly. Again and again he insisted upon filling the glass of his friend, nor was he backward in repeatedly emptying his own. Between the generous qualities of the wine and the fascination of Grandaville's society, the impressible Frenchman speedily forgot his suspicions of his companion and the other disagreeable incidents of the day. By the time supper was finished, and never were travellers in condition better to enjoy it, the old cordiality was fully restored. Weariness was forgotten, and the trials of the journey were made occasions for heartiest joke and laughter. The wine, if the truth must be told, had already made such an impression upon both of the friends that neither was capable of the strictest discretion.

"Plantation life may be very agreeable to some people," said Solorgne, as he balanced the glass he had just emptied upon the palm of his hand, "but may the devil catch me, if he ever finds me so far from the city again, after I have once got safely back to it."

The laugh Grandaville indulged, in response to this exhibition of spleen, was a mixture of amusement and contempt, the latter not at all disguised.

"For the soul of me," continued the impulsive Frenchman, now piqued to a still more decided expression of his opinion, "I can't understand what possible attraction such a place as this can have for a man of taste and breeding. You may smile, but to me its perfectly horrible. The whole establishment appears to be filled with gorgons, ghouls and goblins, and I don't know how many other children of darkness. I've not seen a Christian countenance, save your own, since I have been in it."

"Which proves that you have not seen all it contains," rejoined Grandaville with enough heat to show that he resented the imputation cast upon his favorite property.

"Then I should like to behold its redeeming feature, if such it has, for no other purpose than to drive away the impression the black devils I have already seen have left upon my mind."

"So you shall," exclaimed Grandaville warmly. "Follow me, and you will be convinced."

With these words the host arose hastily, and taking a lamp from the table at which they were sitting, led the way. Solorgne followed with curiosity thoroughly aroused.

The proprietor of the mansion conducted his visitor from one long hall into another, both as gloomy as it was possible for them to be, until a half-open door was reached, through which a cheerful light was streaming. Without stopping to knock, or giving other notice of his purpose, Grandaville threw the door wide open and entered the apartment. Solorgne followed without hesitation; but had scarcely set his foot across the threshold, when he paused in utter amazement. The spectacle that met his eyes was the very last he had expected to see. He

found himself surrounded with evidences of taste and elegance, which, in contrast with what he had witnessed elsewhere, appeared like the work of enchantment.

The apartment was large and handsomely decorated ; the furniture rich and varied, and arranged with a view to harmony of effect. A lighted lamp, standing upon a small table in the centre of the room, and just sufficiently shaded to give a softened tone to the scene, revealed quite enough to produce a most agreeable impression. Some one of refined and genial tastes, it was clear to Solorgne's ready perception, was occupant there.

But what, after the first hurried survey, which took in the general adornment of the room, riveted his attention, was a female seated at the table upon which the lamp was resting. An open book was in her hand, as if she had been interrupted in the act of reading. Her face, at the moment, was so far hidden by the shade of the lamp that the visitor could form no idea of it, but her hand, in which the book was held, rested in the full blaze of the light, and was so softly and transparently fair, as well as so perfectly moulded, that he had no hesitancy in coming to the conclusion that the owner was not only a white person, but that she was young and beautiful. That she was strikingly, if not becomingly, attired, he at the same time perceived.

His first impression was fully confirmed when the girl, or rather woman, as she really was, hastily arose from her seat, and stood, with the light falling full upon her features, as if to ask the meaning of such unceremonious intrusion. A view of her form, at the same time, was thus unintentionally given. One more perfect it would be difficult to imagine. She was tall, and in the attitude of indignant, though silent, protest, in which she then appeared, absolutely queenly. Her apparel, while

not without certain negligences, and in accord with no strictly approved fashion, was such as harmonized with form and features, heightening the effect of both. A loosely-fitting robe, gathered about the waist with cord and tassel, had been left, on account of the heat of the weather, so far unfastened as to expose a snowy neck, and afford a glimpse of shoulders equally chaste. Her hair, which seemed remarkably luxuriant, had been gathered to the top of her head, and there plaited and arranged in resemblance of a crown, except a single tress which rippled loosely down upon her shoulders like a brooklet scattering in its fall. Her eyes were large and darkly luminous, and would have been too bright but for a shade of seriousness amounting almost to melancholy. Her features were regular, giving evidence at once of sprightliness and energy of will. Her brow was like alabaster, its complexion transparent almost to pallor. A diamond ring—the only jewelry visible—appeared upon one ungloved hand, and sparkled sharply in the light.

While her attitude, at that moment, doubtless exhibited greater stateliness than was habitual, her appearance, as she stood silent and almost defiant, was certainly singularly impressive ; and at that time and in that place, to the man who for the first time found himself in her presence, fairly startling. No vision could have been more unexpected and embarrassing.

While Solorgne did not at once take in all the points of the picture, he could not fail to realize their full effect. His confusion was so great that, when Grandaville undertook to give him a formal introduction, he was powerless to utter a word.

“Isabella, my friend Solorgne.”

Of the ease and grace of manner for which his coun-

trymen are celebrated, Solorgne ordinarily possessed a full share, and never more so than when in female society ; but now the fluent Frenchman was at a loss for the most simple compliment. He continued to gaze upon the unexpected vision without opening his lips.

Seeing his complete bewilderment, Grandaville added in a louder tone, accompanied with a smile bordering upon a sneer :

“ You will admit now, my good fellow, I think, that you were too fast in denouncing the attractions of my plantation. Nothing but gorgons, ghouls and goblins, ha ! ”

The bantering words of his companion recalled Solorgne to himself. He bowed awkwardly to the lady, and replied with what was intended for a candid confession of his error. What he said, he hardly knew.

The manner of Isabella, as the lady had been called, was not such as to reassure him. Her greeting was most formal, showing manifest displeasure at the way in which her privacy had been invaded. Resuming her seat, after a bare acknowledgment of the visitor’s bow and salutation, she remained rigid and silent, her open book still in her hand, but without resting her eyes upon it. Solorgne felt that ordinary civility required him to say something ; but so confused was he by what had occurred, and so uncertain concerning the person to be addressed, that he was totally unable to begin a conversation. Grandaville, by a single word, might have removed the difficulty, but he evidently enjoyed his friend’s embarrassment. Consequently he said nothing.

At last growing desperate, and resolved in some way to end the oppressive silence, Solorgne, instead of speaking to the lady, turned to his friend :

“ You certainly are entitled to the credit of knowing how to keep a secret. When I sought to be your companion

to-day, I dreamt of no such surprise. This is, indeed, unexpected happiness."

The answer was a sarcastic smile, which Solorgne's profession of happiness, under the circumstances, might well have provoked. The words he had spoken, however, were productive of a result he did not anticipate. She, who had been called Isabella, gave him a quick, searching glance, as if still suspicious, notwithstanding his profession of previous ignorance of her existence, that his visit had some reference to herself. The result of her scrutiny was evidently in favor of his sincerity, as her features relaxed their expression of offended pride, and a look different from any they had worn—pleasant and kindly—took its place. It said, as plainly as words could have expressed it, that all antagonism between the stranger and herself was at an end. It is not probable that he fully caught its meaning; but in some way Solorgne became conscious of the change. Before she opened her lips, he felt that a barrier had been removed from between them.

The newly-awakened friendship on her part was not to be merely of a passive kind. With the ready tact in such matters for which women are justly so much more celebrated than men, by asking an unimportant question or two concerning the day's journey, she quickly put her visitor at his ease. From that point, conversation flowed readily and naturally enough.

It did not take Solorgne long to discover that he had met a person of no limited intelligence. He was particularly struck with the information she possessed concerning his own country. Incidentally mentioning his native city, he was surprised to hear her refer to points of local interest it contained, with which he supposed no one but a resident to be familiar.

Had she ever visited France? Never, except in imag-

ination. How then had she come to learn so much about it? That was a matter easily explained. Books had been her companions.

“France,” said she “has been almost a passion with me. I have always delighted to read about it, and its merry, sunny people. I have dreamt about it too, and to my imagination it has seemed like fairy-land. If I were endowed with wings, and could fly away to whatsoever spot I thought the brightest, I would never rest nor weary until I had reached your delightful country.”

We can faintly imagine the effect of such words upon a stranger in a strange land. Even to the ear of one less excitable and less patriotic than Frenchmen usually are, they could not have failed to bring the most agreeable emotions.

Solorgne was more than gratified. He was charmed, and began to pour out a profusion of thanks and compliments that contrasted oddly enough with the difficulty he had experienced in finding the most common-place civilities a few minutes before.

With a musical laugh, at which no one could take offence, Isabella interrupted the flow of his acknowledgments.

“But what puzzles me,” said she, “is that, if France be really what my imagination paints it, and what all enthusiastic Frenchmen like yourself describe it, you could persuade yourself to leave it for a sultry clime like ours, here to wander amid forests and swamps in quest of you know not what.”

“Ah, mademoiselle!” responded Solorgne, now driven back to his native gallantry for rejoinder, “when such attractions as the plantation of my friend Grandaville affords are awaiting us, we can go anywhere, and would cheerfully risk any peril.”

“But what puzzles me,” he added in a half bantering tone, by way of retaliation, “is to find in this retired spot a flower fairer than any the city boasts, wasting its fragrance and beauty in the solitude of the dull country.”

“Dull country!” replied Isabella warmly. “Don’t call the country dull. I love the country. We have nature in the country. In the city you lead but artificial lives. Existence there is like the landscape on canvas. It may possess the colors, but where are the fragrance, the warmth, the soul? To me, the country, with its sunshine, its music and its busy life, is never dull. The birds, that are the keenest pleasure-hunters alive, will not live in the city, except in cages. Here they stay unbidden. I have an orchestra of the happiest songsters, and every song is a free-will offering. Every hour in the day brings a serenade from knights and squires of richest plume. I could live nowhere but in the country.”

“But society—the lack of society!” hesitatingly protested Solorgne, half silenced by his companion’s enthusiasm.

“Society!” rejoined Isabella as warmly as before. “You do not suppose we are without society here?”

“Doubtless not; but probably, until I met you, I had seen only the dark side of the picture.”

“I understand. You think there is no society in negroes. Again I must differ with you. I find the same society in negroes that I find in children; and I would pity the man or woman that could grow lonesome in the midst of children. Their spirits are elastic. It is not intelligence that creates sociability. Of that we can have enough in the country. I have the brains and the wisdom of a hundred great men and women shut up within my library here, and very dull companions I sometimes find them, too. I delight at times to fly from them, and seek

reanimation in the company of those very children of nature you think so unworthy. If their bodies are black, their hearts are always gentle and kind. If they were not so, how could the poor creatures sing songs that are so sweet and tender? O, I do so delight in their wild, sad minstrelsy!"

Solorgne had already noticed a piano and other evidences of a musical taste in the apartment, and now eagerly took advantage of her last remark to ask Isabella to favor him with one of the songs she had applauded so highly.

Without apology or pretended hesitation, she suffered herself to be conducted to the piano, and, after lightly touching the keys, began one of those simple negro melodies which, coming from the heart, have never failed to reach the heart; for in true pathos, which is the soul of music, however inartistic they may be, they far surpass the greatest productions of the great masters. Her voice was rich and variable, and her command of the negro dialect perfect; while the instrumental accompaniment, probably her own composition, was in full accord with the spirit of the song. Solorgne was enthusiastic in his commendations at the conclusion of the first piece, and eagerly asked for another. So often was the same request repeated and complied with, that he was at last, spite of the enjoyment he realized, forced by a sense of propriety to desist, with an equal profusion of thanks and apologies.

"There is another kind of music of which I am almost as fond," said Isabella, as Solorgne stepped forward to lead her from the instrument. Then, without appearing to notice his purpose, she ran her hands over the keys, apparently at random, until, as if by a sudden thought, she struck upon France's great revolutionary hymn—the Marseillaise.

Solorgne was alike surprised and gratified as the notes of that boldest, maddest and most thrilling of airs rolled out from the richly-toned instrument ; but his emotions were changed to astonishment when the voice of the singer burst forth in the clear, crisp words of the original song, in his own melodious French. Up to that moment he had not suspected her of being familiar with but the one language, all their conversation having been carried on in English, of which he was almost as thorough a master as of his own tongue.

Without pausing, at the conclusion of the song, long enough to allow her excited auditor to give expression to his feelings, Isabella dashed into the rollicking air of Yankee Doodle, and went through its romping, giddy measure with quite as much enthusiasm as she had shown in any of the others. Solorgne did not know what to make of it. Utterly uncertain what eccentricity her inspiration or fancy might next suggest, he could only wait in awkward, but pleasurable, silence, ready to welcome whatever came. Then, stopping for a short time, as if lost in earnest thought, clearly and firmly, but in a tone of sadness so plaintive that her heart seemed to be speaking rather than her lips, Isabella proceeded to sing, softly striking the keys as she did so, the following words :

Because my brow is clothed in smiles,
Dream not my heart beneath is light :
What though the glamour still beguiles
When joy has ta'en its lasting flight.
'Tis like the light of fading day,
That lingers when the sun is set :
How lovely the delusive ray,
So beautiful and lustrous yet !

I've had my morning with the rest ;
Ah ! never was there fairer dawn :
Hope waked its music in my breast—
Then died as others' hopes have gone.

I do not sorrow nor complain ;
 I shed no tear o'er raptures fled ;
 I let the old, old smiles remain,
 Bright garlands for the early dead.

How strange is life's resistless tide !
 Its changing currents come and go :
 A pang is born, a joy has died—
 Ah ! little can we see or know,
 When peacefully its waters sleep,
 The riot of the tempest o'er,
 What forms lie buried in the deep,
 What wrecks are cast upon the shore !

Better, far better come not near ;
 Look rather at my smiling brow :
 A sunny face shall still appear,
 Whatever pangs may lurk below.
 Better by far to leave my heart,
 My crushed and silent heart, alone :
 Nothing but pain could it impart,
 Were the unspoken story known.

What could it mean ? Solorgne was like one dreaming. The music had ceased, but not a word was spoken. Isabella remained at the instrument, silent and abstracted, like a performer who had forgotten the part she was to play. Solorgne said nothing, did nothing. He was still listening to the strains of the singer, which seemed to linger in his ears like a cry of distress. Could the sorrow be real ? Was it a confession, or were the words he had heard simply the adoption of a morbid fancy—of an eccentric musical taste ? He did not know what to think about it, and in his abstraction, regardless of the demands of courtesy, with his eyes fixed eagerly upon Isabella, remained like a statue.

The silence was broken in an unexpected manner.

There was another person in the room, whose very existence at least one of the parties to the scene I have been describing, had entirely forgotten. During the greater part of the time that the incidents just related

were transpiring, Solorgne was utterly unconscious that there was such a being as Grandaville. Isabella was the only person he had seen.

Grandaville, however, had been far more observant. Not one word or movement of the others had escaped his notice. The effect of the wine, which had roused him to temporary gayety and badinage, and which, as we have seen, led to the meeting between Isabella and Solorgne, soon passed off, leaving him in the same sullen, silent mood he had manifested during the greater part of the day. In that condition he sat by and heard the conversation already detailed. But when, in the music scene, he witnessed the glances of unmistakable admiration his friend bestowed upon the beautiful singer, and the freedom with which she elicited them, his eyes fairly glared, his lips were compressed until they became colorless, and he seemed scarcely able to control some powerful resentment. He held himself in check, however, until the song above given was finished, during the rendering of which he had by turns grown flushed and pale, when, springing to his feet, he gave a bell-cord that was near at hand a violent pull.

“Send Cæsar,” he said to the female servant that immediately appeared in answer to his summons.

“Cæsar,” exclaimed his master, as a colored man presented himself, “conduct that gentleman to his room.” His voice betrayed his agitation, especially when the word “gentleman” passed his lips. Then, as if conscious that he had gone too far in showing passion, he added, “I owe an apology for not thinking of the day’s fatigue before now.”

“No apology is needed,” replied Solorgne with astonishing lack of penetration. “The time has never passed so agreeably.” Then, bowing a cheerful good-night, he

followed the servant, utterly unaware of the scowl with which his departure was watched.

Reaching his room, he was about to disrobe for the night, when he observed that his conductor, a great, sullen negro, remained stationary in the centre of the apartment, with his eyes fast riveted upon him. He motioned him to depart, and, not then stirring, ordered him sharply to "begone!" Cæsar turned, and slowly stalked from the room. But a moment afterwards, casting his eyes in the direction of the door, Solorgne was surprised to see it half open, and the imperturbable negro, standing like a statue just outside, still gazing stolidly at him.

"Perhaps this will remove you," said Solorgne, half irritated and half amused, tossing a silver coin towards the grim sentinel. The statue picked up the coin, displayed a line of ivories, and disappeared behind the shut door.

"What a strange place!" soliloquized Solorgne. "What a strange place!" he repeated, as he laid himself down. So strange was it that he continued to pass in review, weary as he was, all that he had witnessed since entering it.

A wonderfully beautiful image occupied the foreground in his thoughts. He had now discovered, he felt confident, the cause of Grandaville's strange behavior during the day, in the person of her who was called Isabella, and whom, for some unaccountable reason, he disliked others to see at his plantation. But who was this Isabella? That was now the mystery. Intimate as he had been with Grandaville, and often as he had heard him speak of his plantation, he had never known him to allude to such a person, either as tenant or visitor. She was not his wife, because it was well understood that he was espoused to a lady of wealth and position in the city, but whom Solorgne had never seen. That she should occupy

a more equivocal relation towards him, Solorgne could not believe of one so accomplished, and holding the sentiments she had expressed. No, no ; nothing of that kind could be possible. Was she his sister ? And what, whoever she might be, could attract or detain her there ? Was there sorrow, as well as mystery, in the case ? Here the words of the song he had heard her sing came back upon him, and he seemed to be listening once more to the mournful strain. As everything else grew more and more indistinct, louder, clearer, more earnest and plaintive swelled the last sentence that had escaped her lips, again and again repeated :

Nothing but pain could it impart,
Were the unspoken story known.

CHAPTER VII.

GARDEN AND BOWER.

THE morning was well advanced when Solorgne awoke from the heavy sleep which the excitement and over-exertion of the previous day had induced. He was doubtful, at the first return of consciousness, whether he was not under the influence of a frightful dream, as the first object that met his gaze was the countenance of the negro Cæsar, his great whitish eyes fixed immovably upon him. The head of the African alone was visible, that portion of the body being projected through an opening in the doorway just wide enough to admit it, while the balance made use of the door for a shield.

"What do you want, you infernal scare-crow?" roared the Frenchman angrily.

"Breckfust ready," slowly responded the apparition.

"Then clear out!"

The head disappeared from its post of observation, and Solorgne, springing out of bed, proceeded to clothe himself as rapidly as possible. Outside the door he found the patient Cæsar waiting to conduct him to the morning meal.

There, instead of finding Grandaville, as he had expected, he found a note from him, announcing that business had called the writer away for the day, and conveying the hope that his guest would be able to amuse himself in examining the plantation. Solorgne, in view of his entertainer's conduct of the day before, was not disap-

pointed. In fact, in the frame of mind in which he then was, he was decidedly gratified. Here was an opportunity to prosecute, without the fear of observation, an inquiry into a matter that then interested him more than anything else.

Why not begin the investigation at once? he asked himself. There was Cæsar—why not make a witness of him?

“Cæsar,” he began, “where’s your master?”

“Gone ‘way.”

“Where’s your mistress, then?”

The negro looked at his examiner steadily, as if he did not understand the question.

“Don’t you understand, blockhead? I mean Miss Isabella.”

The same imperturbable stare.

“Is Miss Isabella not your mistress?”

The same result.

“Do you know where Miss Isabella is?”

This time, after a long delay, the fixed expression of the eye was followed by an indecisive shake of the head.

The first attempt was a failure.

Breakfast over, the baffled inquirer sallied forth in the hope of finding more favorable subjects upon which to prosecute his search for information.

Being the first plantation he had visited, his interest was naturally enlisted in its examination.

The mansion he discovered to be a large and rather imposing building, made up of two long wings combined in the form of the letter “L,” the whole surrounded by a veranda or open stoop. The building was two stories high, and crowned at the highest point of the roof with a considerable platform or observatory, unenclosed except by a balustrade. The structure had evidently, when new,

been one of considerable architectural pretension, but now plainly showed the marks of age and inadequate attention to repairs. About the house was a magnificent grove of native forest trees, large and thrifty, making a beautiful park, and a delightfully-shaded lawn.

The plantation itself was a valuable one. Its situation could hardly have been more attractive. For background was a sparkling sheet of water—one of those lakes or bayous so frequent in that region, whose shell-covered beach furnished the plantation an exquisite border for its mantle of dark green.

The place had, however, seen better days. Everywhere evidences of waste and hastening dilapidation were observable. This was the natural result of the management to which it was submitted. With its owner absent the greater portion of the time, enjoying the pleasures and dissipations of city life, it was left chiefly to the charge of slaves. Such care as they bestowed was totally inadequate. However faithful and devoted to their master's interests bondsmen might be, it was not in the nature of things that they should exercise the vigilance that a proprietor would. Deriving no benefit from their industry in any event, beyond a mere bodily support, what inducement had they to put forth any exertion which conflicted with their personal comfort and ease? The laborer is worthy of his hire, and if there be no sufficient wages, there will be no disproportionate effort.

Deeply interested in all he saw, but at the same time disappointed in not meeting one who had now become the plantation's highest attraction in his eyes, the visitor wandered on, until his attention was called to an enclosure, at no great distance from the mansion, which seemed to be a plot of ground specially set apart for the cultivation of fruits and flowers. Seeking a gate he entered,

and was surprised to find the evidences of a degree of taste and careful cultivation of which he had elsewhere seen no indication. The garden, for it was nothing more, was not extensive ; but the arrangement of walks and bowers, with a view to labyrinthine effect, was so skilful as to confuse the casual visitor, and create in his mind an impression of much greater extent than the fact justified. Everything was in the best possible order, neat and carefully trained. The productions of this favored spot were simply such fruits and flowers as were indigenous to the soil, but so rich in coloring and abundant in variety, that the place looked like the work of fairy hands, or of magic.

Solorgne followed the windings of a path, delighted with what he saw ; but, had proceeded but a little way, when he became aware that the garden had other occupants than himself. Turning the angle of a walk which presented a view he had not before seen, he found himself close upon an individual engaged in training a vine upon the lattice of a bower. It was a female, singularly, if not fantastically, dressed in a loose skirt of gaudy colors, and a turban consisting of a scarf or handkerchief ingeniously interlaced so as to form a light but graceful and striking cover for the head.

There is no article of personal apparel which combines so much dignity and taste as the turban, and much of our pleasure in oriental painting is due to that feature in dress. The female slaves upon Southern plantations, not exempt from the vanities of their sex, and frequently displaying rare judgment in the use of the limited material they possessed for personal adornment, often outstripped their free countrywomen of fairer complexion in picturesqueness of costume, when not too critically examined—a result due in large measure to their almost universal adoption of the turban. To a person of Solorgne's

excitable temperament, who had seen but little of plantation life, such novelty of dress was striking in the extreme ; particularly when his imagination was ready to supply face and form of the most perfect type ; for he was not mistaken in supposing that she whom he beheld, although her back was towards him, was Isabella.

Her occupation was such as to display the attractions of a faultless form to the best possible advantage. At one moment she was standing on tip-toe, securing a vine at an elevated point of the trellis, and the next bending nearly to the earth. Her movements were quick and full of grace, showing a degree of elasticity which nothing but considerable practice in such employments could have produced.

Solorgne stood perfectly still, quite overcome by the sudden vision. For several minutes he remained thus, as if spell-bound, an unsuspected witness of the girl's labors. But to play the spy, with all his weaknesses, was no part of his nature. He was about to retire unobserved, as he had come, when he was arrested by something which irresistibly fixed his attention. Isabella had begun to sing in her work. The words he heard were as follows :

The walls of the castle were massive and high,

So high, so high :

The lady within them could nothing but sigh,

But sigh, but sigh.

Said she to the South wind that played with her hair,

Her hair, her hair :

O ! could ye a message to Lionel bear ?

Could bear, could bear ?

The South wind went singing with joy on its way,

Its way, its way :

The lady, she sighed in the castle all day,

All day, all day.

She knew not, and dreamt not, that succor was near,

Was near, was near :

For the South wind had whispered in Lionel's ear,

His ear, his ear.

At this point, noticing that a vine had become detached near the top of the trellis, the singer broke off in her song, until she had placed a garden-step in such position as to give her the necessary elevation to restore it to its place. Standing upon the step, as her fingers were busy refastening the vine, she took up the song where she had left off :

The walls of the castle were massive and high,
So high, so high :
But Love over rampart the strongest can fly,
Can fly, can fly.
It laughs at defences of iron and stone,
And stone, and stone :
It enters strong gates by a way of its own,
Its own, its own.

The lady heard sounds at her lattice that night,
That night, that night :
The morn found her far, far away in her flight,
Her flight, her flight.
Oh ! here, in this prison, I sigh to be free,
Be free, be free :
But who is there coming with succor for me ?
For me, for me.

The words were very simple, and, perhaps, meaningless ; but there was something so plaintive in the tone in which they were sung, that Solorgne, at the moment, believed them to be the expression of actual feeling. He forgot everything except the singer and her appeal for deliverance. Before he was conscious of what he was doing, he had stepped forward and exclaimed :

“Lady ! I know not what may be your distress, but you shall find at least one friend in me.”

The next moment, he would not for worlds that he had thus spoken. Isabella, turning quickly, gave him one glance, and then, springing lightly from the step, moved away without a word. A moment took her to the opposite side of the arbor and out of sight. Nonplussed by

her abrupt departure, and chagrined at his own indiscretion, Solorgne knew not what to do ; but finally resolved to follow and offer an apology. Before, however, he had reached that conclusion, she was nowhere to be seen. There were several paths leading from the spot, bounded by shrubbery higher than a person's head, and by one of these she had made her escape.

As he was looking to discover in what direction she had gone, his attention was suddenly arrested by something gazing and grinning upon him, as if watching his movements, which he made out, after some little examination, to be a human countenance. Nothing could be seen but a face peering out of a clump of bushes, small, mischievous, and perfectly black. Whatever body belonged to it, was hidden behind the branches and leaves.

"Out of that, you rascal, this minute," exclaimed Solorgne angrily. There was a movement among the twigs, and out from among them bounded a small black object, which rolled over and over, until it brought up some distance from where Solorgne was standing. There, with body crouched down upon hands and feet, it looked searchingly at the intruder. Whether it belonged to the human or the monkey species, it was some time before Solorgne could tell.

"Come here !" he said to it at last.

The creature continued to look steadily at him without stirring.

Remembering his financial experiment with Cæsar, he concluded to try it again. Taking a silver coin out of his pocket, he held it up in his fingers. The black object appeared to be affected. At length, putting on a more than ordinarily comical grimace, it spoke :

"Be'se you'se trader?"

"A trader ! That's what you're afraid of, is it ?" And

Solorgne broke into a hearty laugh. "No! I'm no trader," he said. "I wouldn't take such a looking thing as you are in a present, much less buy you."

Thus assured, the negro boy, for that was what the creature was, slowly arose to his feet, and approached timidly, and with a look of suspicion, until able to reach the coin in the extended hand. Having received it, he bounded quickly back, until again at a safe distance.

"What's your name?" asked Solorgne.

"Frog."

"Frog! What makes them call you that?"

The boy gave a leap into the air, and before again becoming stationary, had executed a half-dozen summersaults with surprising agility. Then, looking up in Solorgne's face, his own wore an expression of triumph exceedingly grotesque.

"I see, I see. Who is your father?"

"Dragon."

With this the boy pointed towards a gray-haired negro who was watering some plants not far off.

"Frog, the son of Dragon!" exclaimed Solorgne, laughing heartily. "What a queer place! But tell me, Frog, who was that lady that was here a minute ago?"

"Does you'se mean Missus Bella?"

"Yes! yes! that's the very person I mean. Who is she?"

"Missus Bella."

"You rascal! But who is Missus Bella?"

A look, half of cunning, and half of suspicion, followed by a summersault, was the only reply.

"Where did she come from?"

Another summersault.

"How long has she lived here? Speak, I tell you."

It was of no use. The boy could do nothing but play

frog, taking care to keep beyond his questioner's reach. Even another silver coin was displayed in vain. The white eyes sparkled with longing glances, and his mouth fairly watered with eager covetousness, but the lips absolutely refused to open.

"Pshaw! I'll try the old one," exclaimed Solorgne angrily, leaving the son in the act of balancing himself on head and hands, and approaching the ancient Dragon.

"Good morning, old gentleman!" he began.

The negro went on deliberately with his work.

Another "good morning," in a louder key, had no more effect; when the Frenchman, losing all remaining patience, sharply applied a twig he held in his hand to the old man's shoulder. That reminder had the desired effect. The aged negro looked up, and no sooner did he see the stranger, than he snatched off a remnant of a hat from his head, and began a series of elaborate bows.

"Did you see a lady in the garden a short time ago?" inquired Solorgne.

"Dat der melia," (meaning camellia) responded the old man, his attention on a shrub he had just been watering. "'Ums berry tender when 'ums fust moved; needs lots ob der water."

"No! no! no!" shouted Solorgne in a still louder voice. "The lady, I mean—not the shrub; the white lady in long dress and with red scarf upon her head."

"Yas! yas! I knows 'um," replied the negro with the utmost gravity. "Dat der zalea" (meaning the azalea). "Der flowers am white an' red, an'—you'se wuthless, good-fur-nuffin' nigger, what der mischief is you'se doin' dar?"

The conclusion of the sentence was addressed to the old man's hopeful progeny, Frog, who, in some of his gymnastic exercises, had tumbled headforemost into a

bed of rare and beautiful flowers, where he was then rolling about in a vigorous effort to extricate himself. And with that, the irate old African, leaving his questioner to inform himself as best he could, rushed, scolding and sputtering, to drag his son from among his favorite plants.

"Stranger and stranger," soliloquized Solorgne, as he walked slowly away. "Everybody is either deaf, dumb or crazy. What an extraordinary place! What would I not give to be at the bottom of all this mystery!"

But with all his anxiety, no satisfaction did he obtain. Of Isabella he saw no more that day, although several times he revisited the garden in the hope of meeting her. The slaves he found communicative enough, until the subject which was uppermost in his mind was approached, when invariably they grew taciturn, or seemed incapable of understanding the simplest question. The close of the day found him no wiser than he had been in the morning.

With evening Grandaville returned. He was in excellent spirits. Wine was ordered in, and when supper was over, cards were produced. Solorgne longed for a different disposition of the evening; but so uncertain was he of everything about that singular place that he dared not give expression to his wishes. Grandaville seemed to think only of the game they were playing, in which so little interest was taken by his guest that, when the hour of midnight had come, the former's winnings fully cancelled certain obligations he was owing the latter on account of loans with which from time to time he had been accommodated.

"We start early for the city," said Grandaville, as he observed that midnight had come. "I would cheerfully give you the opportunity of reversing the order of our luck to-night, but we will both need rest for our journey."

With that he summoned Cæsar, and put Solorgne in his charge.

At an early hour Solorgne found Cæsar waiting to attend him. Breakfast was quietly dispatched, Grandaville seeming taciturn, even to moroseness.

“Now to horse!” said he, as they rose from the table.

At the door the gentlemen found their horses in waiting. They mounted without a word. The question Solorgne was burning to ask, he was utterly prevented from breathing by his companion’s manner.

Already were they in their saddles, when his heart gave a leap. A door of the mansion opened, and out swept Isabella, becomingly attired in a loose morning wrapper, and moved directly to the point where the riders were in waiting. In that light and comfortable costume, with the sun’s early rays revealing her clear, fresh complexion, she appeared even more beautiful to Solorgne than she had in her own apartment. Lifting his hat he began an elaborate and somewhat confused compliment on her appearance.

Without seeming to notice his words, she proceeded, with a winning smile, and in appropriate language, to express the pleasure his visit had afforded her, and the hope that, when convenience permitted, it would be repeated, concluding with her best wishes for a safe and pleasant journey.

Grandaville had marked her appearance with a scowl amounting almost to fierceness. Waiting to permit no further conversation, he struck spur and dashed forward. Solorgne was compelled to follow.

Isabella slowly walked back to the house, where, taking her stand in the doorway, she watched the receding forms of the travellers. Long after they had passed out of sight, she remained standing there with her hand shading her eyes, and an expression upon her countenance, oh! so sad and wistful.

CHAPTER VIII.

POOR MOTH.

DMUND SOLORGNE had not paid his last visit to Ruy Grandaville's plantation. A few days saw him there again, and, from that time forward, rarely did forty-eight hours pass without bringing him to that out-of-the-way place. But no more journeys did he make in company with the plantation's owner. Henceforward he rode alone, and the direction he took was not even communicated to his former friend and companion. In fact a coldness, dating from the events already detailed, sprang up between them, which operated more and more to hold them apart. There had been no quarrel, and when they met, a revival of something of their former cordiality would take place ; but there was no longer that attraction which had daily drawn them together. The intervals between their meetings grew longer and longer.

As a result of the separation, Solorgne was enabled to dispose of the greater portion of his time without the knowledge of his friend—as he still considered him, although that consideration did not restrain him from using his opportunity to ride often in the direction of his friend's plantation. He had discovered that the route taken on the occasion of his first visit was far from being the shortest and most agreeable. He found that, with increased practice in horsemanship, and the selection of a more spirited roadster, the journey was nothing more than a pleasant ride. He now bestowed a great deal of

attention on out-door exercises, persuading himself that his health was in danger of suffering from confinement. For that reason he discovered a necessity for frequent airings. The atmosphere in the direction of Grandaville's plantation seemed by all odds the most bracing. While he would not have thought of such a thing as visiting his friend's establishment without that friend's knowledge and concurrence, he could see nothing wrong in calling there, merely to rest himself, when taking his accustomed exercise. With such casuistry did he justify his conduct in his own eyes, without stopping to inquire too closely what his real motive was—an inquiry which would speedily have shown the fallacy of his reasoning.

To Isabella he presented himself in the same light in which he sought to appear in his own eyes—merely as one whose calls were incidental rather than designed. In fact, with the limited knowledge he possessed of the lady, and their brief acquaintance, he could not well have obtruded his society on any other ground. In the character he assumed, he was received by Isabella with the courtesy due to a friend of the mansion's proprietor, and his stay made as agreeable as the most considerate politeness on her part could make it, and no further. Her conversation was always intelligent and cheerful—sometimes sprightly and amusing, her manner frank and cordial, and her enjoyment of his society undisguised ; yet, when the limit of a friendly call had been reached, and he reluctantly arose to withdraw, she never insisted upon delay nor urged his return. Neither did he make any progress in unraveling the mystery which surrounded her presence in that singular place. He longed to ask her about herself, but so closely did her unexceptionable reserve keep him to the boundary of a guarded civility, that he could find no opportunity for turning the conver-

sation upon personal matters. On each occasion he went out from her presence more dissatisfied than ever with the relation he sustained to that beautiful and fascinating woman, and more impressed with her superior attractions ; and, as a consequence, more fatally drawn towards her. Each time was he firmly resolved, as he went away, that the next meeting should reveal something that would be decisive of their intercourse. Poor moth ! he was circling round a flame from whose deadly influence he was hourly growing less able to break away. Had he stopped to calmly analyse his feelings, he could not but have discovered from his increasing restlessness, when absent from Isabella's society, how imminent was the danger he was risking. But when did person, intoxicated with any powerful stimulant, pause to seriously calculate the properties and effects of the o'ermastering draught ?

But an incident, purely accidental and seemingly disastrous, was approaching which promised to end the uncertainty and suspense. As Solorgne, after one of his indecisive and unsatisfying interviews, was about to leave the plantation in worse temper with himself than ever before, he found the horse he was riding, a high-mettled steed, disposed to be uncommonly restless. He had mounted to the saddle, and was paying his parting respects to Isabella, who was standing upon the veranda of the mansion, when the animal attempted to start. Drawing him back with an angry pull, Solorgne petulantly administered a sharp cut with his riding-whip. The result was that the spirited beast, stung with the blow, and not permitted to proceed, rearing upon his haunches, threw himself backward upon his incautious rider. The horse quickly sprang up, but Solorgne remained upon the ground motionless and senseless.

With a piercing cry Isabella rushed towards the fallen

man, and bent distractedly over his unconscious form. It might have been womanly sympathy alone which led her to throw her arms about him, and press an eager kiss upon his lips. Certainly she had never exhibited anything but a friendly regard for him before, and then only under a most cautious reserve. Equally certain is it that by the time the negroes had reached the spot, a goodly number of whom displayed astonishing alacrity in discovering what had occurred, and came flocking pell-mell about, she had entirely recovered her usual composure, and sternly commanded silence in the excited throng. Directing the more able-bodied among the slaves to take the wounded man carefully in their arms, she quietly led the way into the house. There she exhibited equal calmness and authority. By her direction he was placed upon a comfortable couch ; the windows were raised to secure a freer circulation of air ; and a restorative, for the preparation of which she gave instruction, was administered by her own hand. In a short time animation came back, and Solorgne, totally unconscious of what had befallen him, or where he was, began to talk in his delirium, passionately calling on Isabella to save him from some fancied danger, accompanied with unmistakable terms of endearment. At once ordering the throng of servants to retire, she remained, with a chosen assistant, by his side, administering soothing draughts and such other remedies as her judgment suggested, until consciousness was fully restored, and he had obtained a fair measure of relief.

From that time she was his physician, as well as his principal nurse. He rapidly recovered ; at the same time secretly rejoicing in the calamity which had made him a physical sufferer. He now thought he saw his way to relief from mental pain greater than his bodily afflic-

tion. He resolved that the opportunity of putting his mind to rest should not be lost. But the difficulty, as he soon discovered, of reaching the point he had in view, when a sagacious woman was to be dealt with, was greater than he had supposed. Although Isabella was much with him, he found it quite impossible to have communication except as she chose. Being the stronger power, her will predominated. Whenever he attempted to turn the current of conversation into a channel leading to the subject uppermost in his thoughts, she would adroitly give it another direction, or, as his nurse, on the ground of necessity for quiet, order an end to their talking, always pleasantly, and sometimes laughingly, but with a gentle authority which could not be disobeyed.

Instead of the mystery of her position being cleared up, it was deepening under his very eyes. First one thing transpired, and then another, calculated to make matters more and more incomprehensible.

One day, having fallen into a protracted sleep, he was awakened in the midst of a dream, in which he fancied himself walking through a grove of magnolias whose branches were brilliant with richly-colored birds, all having human voices, and all employed in pouring forth the strangest, sweetest music, to find his room filled with a low, sad melody. Raising his head quietly from the pillow, and looking in the direction from which the sounds proceeded, he discovered Isabella seated in an easy chair, slowly rocking backward and forward, and singing to herself in apparent forgetfulness of any other presence. Her face wore an expression of quiet, helpless melancholy, totally unlike the sprightly, resolute look ordinarily seen upon it. She was singing a plaintive negro song, one of those common, but mournfully tender, strains

with which the over-taxed plantation laborer was accustomed to beguile the time, the burden of which was :

“ De perfec’ peace ob dat long, long rest,
In de ground where de dead am sleepin’.”

Why was it, the listener asked himself, that while Isabella’s conversation was always cheerful and strengthening, her singing invariably had a mournful tinge? Was it because of her isolation from congenial society, giving a sombre turn to her meditations, or—— He did not know what to think about it.

At this point, glancing suddenly towards the bed, as if just recalling the sick man’s presence, Isabella’s eyes met those of Solorgne. Instantly the expression of her countenance changed. The mournful, dreamy look it had been wearing passed away, and the singer broke into a cheerful laugh.

“ So you have been playing eaves-dropper, have you ? But I fear I have disturbed your rest. I entirely forgot.”

“ I fear I have interrupted your singing. Do not stop on my account. I was interested.”

“ O ! it was nothing but a simple air I had picked up among the negroes ; the words partly theirs, partly mine.”

“ And do negroes and slaves have songs like that ? I thought they were ignorant and barbarous—little better than wild savages, in fact ; totally devoid of education and sentiment.”

“ So are the birds without what we call education ; and yet they sing songs which, if we were able to translate them, I doubt not, would be found to contain more true sentiment than all the fashionable music extant. As for the negroes, poor, patient wretches, I can understand why they sing. Music to them is as necessary as air. It is their outlet for feelings for which they can have no other expression. Trampled upon and crushed as they

are, if they did not find relief in songs which no master's authority can prevent or control, their natures would harden under a sense of their wrongs, and life become intolerable. It is their poetic temperament which enables them to exist as slaves, and derive a fair share of life's happiness; not their want of sentiment. If they did not sing they would rebel or die. Music is the safety-valve of their natures."

"I confess you give me a new idea of the negro's character. I had supposed it was lack of sensibility that made him so patient as a slave—the absence of the finer feelings leaving him susceptible alone in the way the ox is. But do you, indeed, believe that he possesses the nature that would make him resent a wrong as a wrong, and choose the right because it is the right?"

"Your question implies whether I believe the negro to be possessed of a soul; for, without the attributes you speak of, there would be little to separate him from the beasts of the field, with which, unfortunately, his position too closely associates him. I know it may appear paradoxical to speak of courage and manly virtue in connection with the life of a slave, who submits to insult and violence without protest or resentment; but we can all understand how a musical instrument may be capable of sharp and thrilling notes, when none but the lower and coarser tones are elicited, depending entirely upon the keys that are struck. The negro's soul is an instrument from which the hands that have been laid upon it have been employed in calling out only the harsher and sadder utterances. Do not suppose because the life-long slave uncomplainingly wears his chains, and finds partial compensation for his sufferings in a fund of self-awakened pleasure, for which heaven has supplied the means, that he is insensible to the wrongs of which he is made the

victim, and that he will not some day assert the stronger forces of his nature in avenging them. I can plainly foresee the time when, the measure of his afflictions being full, he will turn upon his oppressor and demand the restitution of every right of which he is robbed, and, if unrestrained by a hand stronger, and a sense of justice higher, than his master's, will strike to regain it. I can myself feel—— But what am I doing? I forgot I was talking to a sick man. I trust you have sustained no harm. There, no reply—not another word. As your nurse, I command silence and rest."

The countenance of the speaker, while such sentiments were being avowed, wore an expression stern, positive, almost malignant, and her eye, ordinarily so calm and mild, glowed with a light as intense as it was unusual. As she spoke she arose from her seat, and stood as if defying contradiction. A moment afterwards, and all trace of her agitation was gone.

Solorgne was more than ever mystified. The enigma was more impenetrable now than before. He could not comprehend why Isabella should so warmly espouse the cause of a people so generally despised, and whom he had seen obey her commands as if she neither exercised a limited authority over them, nor scrupled to use it.

But while the circumstance excited his wonder, it in no sense diminished the infatuation that had come over him. On the contrary, it added another element to his passion—an enthusiastic admiration for the higher nature with which Isabella seemed to be endowed. A comparative stranger in the country, he had no prejudice on the subject of holding slaves which her views had shocked. In fact his secret sympathies agreed with hers, and here, he felt, was another bond between them. The more he reflected upon the scene we have described, the more was

Solorgne persuaded of Isabella's superiority, and the more resolute did he become in his purpose of securing the prize of her love, if he could.

He was resolved that the next favorable opportunity should not pass without putting an end to his suspense. That opportunity, however, was slow to come. From that moment Isabella seemed studiously to avoid all confidential communication. Servants were sent to supply his wants: her own visits were simply for inquiry, and at times when protracted conversation was impossible.

Solorgne had so far recovered from the effects of the accident that, but for the one unsatisfied desire that bound him to the plantation, he would gladly have returned to the city. While, in no cheerful frame of mind, discussing the problem which now wholly engrossed his thoughts, he was one day surprised by the entrance of Isabella. Her countenance gave indication of unusual agitation.

"Are you willing," she began without ceremony, "that Ruy Grandaville should meet you here?"

"Grandaville is my friend, and I know of no reason why he should not rejoice at the kindness I have met with under his roof."

"It would be safe, neither for you nor for me, that he should know that you had been a visitor at this house without his knowledge; much less that you had been an inmate for days," proceeded Isabella, almost without seeming to notice what Solorgne had said. "He will be here in less than an hour. Fortunately you are now so far recovered that you can leave without peril to your health. I have secured an easy carriage to convey you to the city. There is yet time for you to avoid meeting your friend, and, as for the servants, a word from me will seal their lips."

"Forgive me; I know I am rash—but Mademoiselle—Isabella—I cannot, shall not, leave this house until you have answered one question. You cannot be ignorant of what attraction brought me here. Who are you? What mysterious power is it that keeps you here? Oh! if you but saw my heart, you would believe that it is no idle curiosity that makes me ask. Shall I not have an answer?"

"Yes; sometime, perhaps;"—for Isabella saw that Solorgne meant all he said—"not now; not now. But you had better strive to forget me, for there is danger—danger that you do not suspect, in this intimacy. There! no more at present. I must, indeed, beg of you not to press this matter now. For my sake, if not for your own, think only of leaving this place at once. There is not a moment to be lost."

An appeal like that, Solorgne could not disregard, intense as his feelings were. He made no immediate response, and almost before he was aware of it, Isabella had left the room. He saw nothing more of her until he was assisted to the carriage, by the side of which she was standing. Surrounded by servants, there was no opportunity there for satisfactory conversation, even had Isabella permitted. But scarcely was he in his seat when, with a wave of her handkerchief, she at the same time signaled the driver to proceed and bade her visitor adieu.

A turn in the road soon gave Solorgne a view of the mansion, and of Isabella standing where he had last seen her, motionless as a statue, her handkerchief still in her hand.

"Danger!" he exclaimed. "Danger in seeking thee! What danger will I not brave to make you mine?"

Another turn in the road hid her from his sight.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SWAMP-SQUATTER'S HOME.

THE condition of things I am dealing with, while familiar enough to the majority of persons now living, will appear strange, almost incomprehensible, to those of the next generation. Men in their prime at the conclusion of the present century, will find it very hard to realise that, during more than one half of it, there existed within the United States of America an institution, protected and encouraged by law, which recognized, at one time, more than four millions of human beings as property—merchandise, and absolutely made them such. The system under which such an anomalous and extraordinary state of things could exist will then seem as remote and unnatural as the feudal system now does to the people of Europe. Then, what is now vividly, often painfully, real, will possess the true glamour of romance, and the novelist will find attractive subjects in matters which are yet repulsive because of their terrible familiarity.

The swift obliviousness of mankind to the existence of negro slavery will be due, not so much to the progressiveness of the age, as to the suddenness of that institution's overthrow. It went down in the sweep of a revolution that destroyed it at once and utterly. A relic of barbarism, extending into an enlightened age, it was like an arm of land projecting into the sea. The tempest and the waves that swept over it have left not a trace behind. Negro slavery created three—not two—distinct classes

of men. Two of these were subordinate and subservient. It would be difficult to tell which, the colored slaves or those whites who were distinguished by the not inappropriate designation of "poor white trash," in the slaveholding States, were most to be commiserated. The chief difference seemed to be that the former wore their chains compulsorily and with stolid submission, while the latter wore theirs voluntarily, but with constant grumbling at the hardness of their fate. As long as slavery predominated, both were doomed to dependence. The spheres of each were rigidly circumscribed. Negroes might secure their freedom by purchase or flight, and poor white men might escape serfdom through enterprise and energy; but the instances of actual deliverance were about as numerous in the one case as the other. The third class, the slave-holders, ruled and used, or rather misused, both of them.

To both of the dependent classes the revolution brought emancipation. To one of them it brought extinguishment.

Fifty, a hundred, ten thousand years hence, the negroes will remain as a race, because Heaven, for a wise purpose doubtless, has designed their separate existence, and has enacted a law which will secure, as all Heaven's laws do, its purpose; but the "poor white trash" of the South disappeared with slavery's abolishment. The men and women remain, but the introduction of common schools and a universal, equal ballot—the incidents of freedom and true levelers, because the real elevators, of society—insured the eradication of those arbitrary divisions among men of the same blood which the privileged class had set up as the surest means of protecting and perpetuating its despotic rule.

The man Walker, heretofore introduced to the reader,

was a fair representative of the “poor white trash” of the South, illiterate, debased, and full of prejudice. Through a piece of exceptional fortune he had been raised to the ruling class, but without any corresponding elevation in character. Becoming a slave-holder, he had become, in his own eyes, a gentleman, entitled and qualified, as he honestly supposed, to put on the airs and authority of a gentleman. But as his power of imitation was limited by his knowledge, which extended only to the vices of his superiors—their idleness, their swagger, their insolence and their cruelty, as may be inferred, his improved circumstances led to no improvement in manners or morals.

As has already been explained, his estate consisted of his family—his children and his children’s mother. That circumstance, however, never caused him to forget that they were property, and that he was their owner. Endowed with no very liberal share of natural affection at the best, he was not inclined to waste what he possessed of that virtue upon “niggers.” In this he was merely exemplifying the philosophy of a system which taught that it was not wise to bestow too much kindness upon slaves, as it tended to disqualify them for their position and duties. Heaven knows that in this way they were not often corrupted.

Nevertheless, the peculiar, although not altogether exceptional, relations existing between Walker and the other members of his household, had some influence upon their intercourse. His children did not call him “father,” because he was their master; they did not call him “master,” because he was their father. The difficulty was compromised by the use of the term “boss,” which was supposed to express effectually the happy blending of the two relations.

To the woman who performed the duties of wife and

mother without thanks and without love, because she was a chattel, Walker exhibited what tenderness there was in his nature by addressing her, when occasion required, as "old gal" or "old 'un."

The oldest girl in the family was a delicate, but graceful, yellow girl, nearly grown to womanhood, who, out of compliment to the State of her nativity, had received the name of Louisiana. But as the name, in its integrity, was entirely too long for any slave to bear, it had been reduced to the rather pretty abbreviation of Lou.

The day following the visit of Grandaville and Solorgne to the swamp-squatter's home, found Lou and her mother sitting alone in the principal room of the cabin—the one answering for kitchen, dining-room, parlor and sleeping apartment for the heads of the household. A coarse piece of cloth was lying upon the knee of the elder woman, who was patiently, but unsuccessfully, with her failing eyesight, endeavoring to introduce a thread into a needle.

"Hand 'um here, mamma, an' jes see how quick I'se will do dat fur yer," spoke up the daughter.

"Bless you, chile! how could I'se eber git 'long without you?" responded the mother, as the girl held up the needle and thread with the proper connection established between them.

"Now de cloth, mamma! You'se knows how cross de boss will be if dat jacket's not done 'gin de time he comes back. I'se ken do it quicker dan you'se ken. 'Tain't nuffin so wonderful, when de pieces all cut so nice, ter stitch dem togeder; jes runnin' de needle through an' through. Somehow you'se don't look 'zactly strong ter-day."

"No, chile, dat am so! I'se been a-feelin' bad fur eber so long. Sometimes I'se tought I'se mought be

gwine ter go. But 'tain't much matter when. Wonder what critters like us war eber made for, any how!"

"Now, mamma, don't talk dat way, don't. Don't yer see how big an' strong I'se a-growin'. Purty soon I'se ken do all der work, an' you'se will hab nuffin ter do but rest an' git well."

And here the girl proceeded to enforce her appeal with an application of arms and lips which seemed to produce a most consolatory effect.

But in the very midst of this affectionate passage, the sound of footsteps was heard. Barely had the women disengaged their arms from about each other, and fixed their attention upon their work, when the master and father came stamping into the house.

Without a word of salutation, Walker seated himself upon a stool, threw his hat upon the bed across the room, and settled his eyes, with a grim, impatient stare, upon the busy women.

"That jacket not done yit?" he began. "Well now, you'd better hurry up, I tell yer."

There was no reply.

"Git me my pipe, some ov yer!" he next exclaimed with a heavy growl.

Lou got up and took the article referred to from the mantel over the fire-place.

"Does yer want it filled and lit, Boss?" she timidly asked.

"Yes, ter be sure!"

Then taking the pipe, prepared as he wanted it, without a word or look of thankfulness, from the girl's fingers, Walker put it to his lips; but his eyes followed his daughter as she returned to a seat by her mother's side. He smoked on for some time in silence, but the direction of his look did not change.

"How old's that gal?" he at last abruptly inquired of the mother.

"Gwine on ter fifteen."

"Cured ov that snake bite yit?"—(puff, puff).

"'Bout."

"Had any more spittin' ov blood?"—(puff).

"No."

"Know ov eny reason, does yer, old gal—(puff)—why she mightn't be said ter be sound—(puff, puff)—in wind an' limb?"

The woman thus addressed arose to her feet, and looked sharply, even defiantly, in her interrogator's face.

"Boss Walker," she said, "I'se understands well 'nough what you'se means. You'se a-thinkin' ob sellin' dat gal."

"Well, 'spose I is; what biz'ness' that ov yourn?"—(puff).

"Izzn't I'se her mother?"

"An' izzn't I her owner?"—(puff).

"Yes, an' her father too; dat's more."

"Don't care if I is—(puff). 'Tother's 'nough."

"Boss Walker," continued the woman, as if not hearing her master's last remark, her eyes now fairly flashing, "I'se only a woman, a slave an' a nigger; but I'se not afeared to tell you dat de man dat will sell his own flesh an' blood, an' specially sich an angel as dat gal is, izzn't fit to hab no critter 'bove a brute. Hum's a brute himself."

"Whew!" went Walker at this display of earnestness, but at the same time taking his pipe from between his teeth, the better to enable him to deliver his reply.

"Hizzn't the gal a nigger? 'Hizzn't she yer young 'un, an' didn't I buy you? I'd like ter know, old gal, what's more ter be said?"

"What's more ter be said?" repeated the woman. "Jes

dis, Boss Walker, dat if you'se a-gwine ter sell dat gal, you'se a-gwine to hab trouble."

"What's that!" exclaimed Walker, springing excitedly to his feet. "What's that yer says? A-threatenin' is yer? See here, old gal; now yer jist shut yer mouth quicker; fur if there's eny more ov that kind ov blowin', I'll jist smash yer; d—m me, if I don't."

And with that the furious man shook his clenched fist in the woman's face.

"Boss Walker," replied the negress, without flinching or receding, and speaking as calmly as before, "you'se may kill me as soon as you'se wants to. I'se habn't got much to lose nohow; not as much as de man dat owns me. An' if you'se a-gwine to sell dat gal, de quicker you'se kills me de better; fur dat will. But I'se tells you'se agin, dat if you'se 'temps anyting ob dat sort, you'se a-gwine to hab trouble, big trouble."

"Yer infernal black——"

The balance of the sentence was lost in the sound of a blow.

"Take that," said the man, standing fiercely over the fallen woman. "That's what yer git fur yer impudence."

Then, continuing to speak to himself, the master went on:

"That nigger's been spoiled. She'se had too much 'tention an' kindness. Its made her persumpshus. Its the way with niggers, when yer treats 'em like other folks. But that's the way ter cure 'em; that's the way ter cure 'em."

Then, turning indifferently away, Walker threw himself upon the bed, and after half audibly muttering something about, "The way ter cure 'em," was soon sound asleep.

Meanwhile the stricken woman lay motionless upon the floor, silent at first, and afterwards emitting low, piteous

moans. She, however, was not left without help. The girl Lou, although for a time paralyzed with fright, was soon by her side, bending affectionately and agonizingly over her. At first she could only call her mother by endearing names, and press her lips upon her cold, pale face. But soon realizing more clearly the necessities of the case, she hastened to bring water, and sprinkle it over the unconscious woman's brow. Her efforts, after a time, were rewarded with signs of reviving animation, and not long after the master had begun to give audible proofs of the soundness of his slumber, the poor bruised wretch was, with her daughter's assistance, enabled to raise her head and look sadly about her.

"It hab come," she began, as if speaking to herself.

"What hab come, mother?" asked Lou tremulously.

"De time fur you'se to go, chile; to 'scape from sich a life as mine."

"O, mamma, mamma! don't you'se tink ob me. You'se de one dat am hurt."

"No, chile! it am little matter now what comes ob me. Dey can't hurt me much more, nohow. All de feelin' dat I'se got am fur you. Listen, gal."

Putting her arms about her mother's wasted form, Lou assisted her to a sitting position, in which she was enabled to speak more freely.

"De time war, chile, when I'se war as young an' simple as you'se is. I'se knowed I'se war a slave, but O! I'se neber knowed what dat war until I'se got to be de property ob dat man a-sleepin' dar. Den, den I'se learned what to be a slave war; de drudge, playting, critter ob a man dat cared nuffin more fur me dan fur a dog. It hab been wuss dan a hundred thousand deaths. No thanks, no lub, no hope—neber nuffin but blows, an' frowns, an' talk about bein' a nigger an' property.

"Dat's what's 'fore you'se, chile," the woman went on, "if you'se stays here. Boss Walker'l sell you'se to some man dat will make you'se jes what I'se is. Better die, chile, at once. You'se can't 'spect to be allers young, an' lib 'way from the men, but you'se hab de right to some man's heart an' 'fection. Hum may be black, or hum may be white ; dat's bery small matter. De ting am to be his equal an' his wife. Be dat when de chance comes, but neber, neber, neber be no man's slave !

"O, I'se seed it a-comin' fur ebber so long !" she continued. "I'se knowed it would come. Now it hab come, an' you'se got to fly—somewhar—to de woods—to de swamp."

"But, mamma, what can I'se do thar ? "

"Steal, starve, drown, be eat up by de allergators, die—anyting, chile, but libin' as your mudder hab libed 'fore you. But hush ! Dar's de boss wakin'."

The woman was none too soon in her warning. Walker had begun to stir uneasily in his sleep, muttering as he did so, "That's the way ter cure 'em ; that's the way ter cure 'em."

CHAPTER X.

REACHING A CRISIS.

OLORGNE'S absence from Grandaville's plantation lasted only until his health and strength were sufficiently recovered to enable him to resume his accustomed out-door exercise.

Isabella seemed to accept his return as conclusive evidence that an explanation was unavoidable. Her efforts to repel his advances by indirect discouragement, and by open warning of danger, had alike failed. She received him frankly, but with no other demonstration, either of satisfaction or the reverse. Her manner was as much as ever a puzzle, but it did not prove indifference. A woman's reserve towards a persistent admirer is always liable to two constructions, she alone knowing which is correct. It may spring from a secret preference, as well as from a positive dislike ; and many a lover, before Solorgne's time, has struggled on between hope and doubt, unable to determine which was the sentiment impeding his desires.

Whatever had been the cause of Isabella's coldness towards Solorgne, it was now manifest enough that she had consented to its abandonment ; either because she found it unavailing to repulse his attentions, or because her heart, having a voice in the matter, had interceded in his behalf. When, therefore, he suggested a walk in the flower-garden, the place of all others to invite a lover's confession, interposing no objection, she went readily, if not cheerfully, with him. Chance, which on such occasions often seems more like the ordering of de-

sign, directed their footsteps to the very arbor at which Isabella had been employed when her present companion had surprised her in the midst of her singing, as shown in a preceding chapter. That circumstance, as soon as they had seated themselves within the leafy enclosure, opened the way to the topic Solorgne desired to introduce.

“Isabella——”

It was the first time he had presumed to address her thus familiarly.

“Why did you fly this spot when, carried away by an impulse I was unable to control, I here sought to assure you of my steadfast friendship, whatever adversity might surround you?”

He paused, but there was no reply.

“O, Isabella! what I then endeavored to tell you, was the avowal of a purpose as sincere, as unalterable, as the heart of man has ever formed or his lips declared.”

“I do not doubt it.”

“Then why did you fly from me, as if my words could inspire nothing but terror? And why have you, from that hour down to the present, discouraged every declaration of my feelings towards you, and acted as if you sought to seal my lips forever, although you must have seen that I was pursuing you from no vain curiosity, but because my heart——”

Something in Isabella’s glance—for the first time during the conversation she now raised her head and looked her companion steadily in the face—quite as much as her words, at that moment checked his utterance.

“Were you not here as Grandaville’s friend?”

“I was, but——”

Without waiting for defence or explanation, she proceeded:

"Were you assured of his consent to your declaration of friendship for me?"

"I was not; but why should Grandaville——"

"Then you were not aware of the relation existing between him and myself?"

"Relation, no! are you his sister?"

"No! no! the relation is one which gives him a much stronger claim than a brother's."

"You cannot have me believe that you are his wife?"

"Not his wife. I am far more absolutely his than if I were."

"Good Heavens! you confound me. You cannot mean that you have surrendered yourself to him, and that your heart is so fully in his possession that you are content to remain the victim of dishonor?"

"He does not possess my heart."

"For mercy's sake explain this mystery!"

"I am his slave."

"His slave! his slave! I do not understand. Only colored people are slaves, and you are not colored. O! I see. Ha! ha! some pleasantry here."

And Solorgne laughed a forced, hollow laugh.

"Would to Heaven it were pleasantry," responded Isabella solemnly and sadly. "Never was I more serious in all my life. None are slaves, it is true, but colored persons, and the descendants of colored persons. But I see you are still incredulous. Listen, then, and I will tell you all."

"Stop!" said Solorgne calmly, and with a decision of tone and manner that commanded obedience. "I saw—have seen from the first—that there was a mystery about your position here. I asked you, at our last interview, to explain it—to tell me who you are. I do not ask that now. The question was unmanly; I withdraw it. What

I now ask you is to be mine. I care not who and what you are, beyond what I see and know. I care not for the relation between yourself and Grandaville, since you are not his wife, and the connection, whatever it is, you tell me, is one which is not binding upon your heart. Grandaville has been—is my friend ; but, if he has done anything, is doing anything, which has placed you, and now keeps you, in his power against your inclination, he is my friend no longer. Henceforward, any one who is your enemy, shall be my enemy. O, Isabella ! Isabella ! tell me first if you will be mine, and you can tell me your story afterwards. It can be nothing that can drive me from you ; nothing that can make me love you less ; nothing that can cause me to be unfaithful ! ”

The woman looked at the speaker, as he uttered these words, steadily, searchingly. There could be no question of his sincerity. Then, bowing her head, she covered her face with her hands. It was but for a moment. Removing her hands, and brushing away a tear, as with indignation at her weakness, she looked steadily before her and spoke :

“ You *must* hear my story. It will make you despise, loathe me, I am well, well aware ; but the truth you shall know.”

“ To understand who and what I am, you must know that I have in my veins the blood of princes and noblemen—pure white blood—such as the proudest are never weary boasting of. That is on one side—my father’s. My mother, too, had good blood ; but that, alas ! was not all. Away back among her remote ancestors was one of African lineage, and his blood, in diminished quantities, but cursing and tarnishing as it flowed, came down until it reached her who bore me. It could have been but a drop at most, for it left a stain that was barely visible

upon her brow. But that drop was enough to make her a slave. It was enough to make me a slave. It was received before I was born, and I entered the world with it in my veins. I don't know where it is ; I never have been able to detect a trace of its presence ; but its there"—(here the speaker held out her hand—a hand as white and chaste as polished marble—upon which she fixed a gaze such as she might have bestowed upon a serpent)—“its there—there—there—somewhere there.”

These words were hissed rather than spoken, while, as if to disprove her assertion, her cheeks and brow had grown pale almost to ghastliness. It seemed as if every particle of blood had left them. Recalling all her strength with an effort, after a brief delay, she went on :

“ What I received from my mother I am compelled to give to others. It seems as if the curse will never end. I became a mother. A slave ! what is she in opposition to her master's will ? Your friend, my owner, was the father ! O ! she was beautiful, my child, my rose-bud. Her eyes were as blue and dreamy as the evening heavens, and her skin was like pearl. In vain would you look for the slightest tinge of that terrible negro stain. But it was there—that drop of blood. It flowed somewhere in her veins. She was my child, and, as my child, she, too, was a slave, and all my miseries were in store for her. She did not live——”

There was a pause, the last words of the speaker sinking as if brought out by an almost superhuman effort. But quickly rallying, Isabella went on :

“ I said to myself, ‘ Better that she should die, than live to be like me. Better, far better, that she should be with the angels, than stay here to take my place.’ I could not find it in my heart to give her nourishment to prolong a life of bondage. Nature's claims were denied. She

passed away like a flower plucked from its stem. Day by day I watched her growing weaker and weaker, paler and paler. Oh ! it seemed as if my heart must relent—or break ; that I should be compelled to give her the means of life. Heaven helping me, I did resist, rejoicing when she was dead. She was free. There is one door through which we can all escape to liberty—the grave. I buried her here in this garden, and it is my sweetest task to train the flowers that grow and bloom above her."

The speaker's emotion was at last too strong for her. She hid her face, and her whole frame shook with the internal conflict. The tempest was long and violent. Minute after minute passed, and she still bent beneath it. At last, summoning fresh resolution, she raised her eyes, and, turning calmly to Solorgne, who sat like one stupefied, she said :

" You now know who and what I am. A slave, a member of that Helot race whose name is a by-word ; the slightest trace of whose blood is a badge of endless shame ; a social outcast, and the victim of a master's wantonness—you can despise, hate, spurn me, as all the others would ! "

" Never ! by the God that sees us, never !" exclaimed Solorgne impetuously. " I admire, love, adore you more than ever. Heaven forbid that your misfortune should change my heart. I do not see you as a slave, as the offspring of negro parentage. In my eyes you are a beautiful, noble woman, made to love and be loved. Born and reared under other laws and influences, I have never learned that dreadful prejudice of race against race you describe. I care nothing for that traditional lineage which here makes you an outcast. No ! no ! I have pledged my word that I would be your friend, your more than friend, and here I declare that, if you will consent, I

will not only set you free, but will give you the protection of my name, my wealth and my social position. You shall be my wife!"

"This is folly," calmly responded Isabella. "However sincere your purpose, and heaven forbid that I should doubt you for an instant! the law stands irrevocably in our way. You forget that I am a slave—Grandaville's property. His claim—that of a master—would be superior to yours, even were you my husband."

"But the law does not prevent him from parting with the title to his property. I know his financial condition. He wants money, and for a few paltry dollars he will sell you—a jewel worth more than millions of gold."

"You are mistaken. You do not know Ruy Grandaville as I do. He may need money, but I understand the value I hold in his eyes. He loves me, slave as I am; has loved me long, and, perhaps, had I not been in his power, I might have loved him. He possesses my body, and I possess his heart. O! there's some recompense in that. He has surrounded me here with every luxury his means could afford. He tells me that he is about to be married to a lady of great wealth; not that he loves her, but that he may continue to supply me with every comfort. I do not doubt the truth of what he says. No! no! Ruy Grandaville will never part with me willingly. If you value your own safety, do not propose such a thing to him. If I am released from his power, it must be in some other way."

"Then we will fly—fly together. We will go to France; that dear, beautiful France of which I have heard you speak so lovingly. Once there, we can defy Ruy Grandaville and the authority the law here gives him. There is no slavery there; no bondage but what love creates. There is none of that terrible prejudice to crush you

down to earth, because an ancestor, generations removed, happened to have a complexion darker than ours. As my wife, you will live an honored, happy, loved, and loving woman. Let us fly at once."

The longing look that took possession of Isabella's eyes, upon hearing these words, was terrible to behold. Again she bent forward and hid her face. The tempest had returned in all its fury. Nothing was heard for a time but her convulsive sobs. Then she acted. She spoke not a word. She uttered no reply to her lover's appeal. She simply reached forth her hand and placed it in his. He seized it and covered it with kisses. The decision was made.

Then came the serious discussion of plans by which they were to make their escape from Isabella's master and from the country. Aware of the terrible risk they were about to incur, they talked calmly enough now: the lover's impetuosity was laid aside. It was decided that, on the third succeeding day, Solorgne was to arrive as usual at the plantation, and that Isabella was to order out her favorite saddle-horse, as if to accompany him in a short ride for exercise. To conceal from the other slaves the direction they intended taking, they were to start in one nearly opposite; but, when out of sight of the plantation, were to change their course, and proceed by unfrequented paths, as rapidly as possible, to a point on the Mississippi a few miles below New Orleans. There Solorgne was to arrange to have a swift steamer in waiting, to take them to the mouth of the river, where they would be transferred to an ocean-bound vessel going to Havana, or some port of Mexico. Thence their way to France would be easy enough.

Their plans matured, fearful that their longer stay might excite suspicion, they arose and passed out of the garden.

Scarcely had they left the spot, when there crept noiselessly from a clump of shrubbery just back of where the lovers had been sitting, a silent, dusky form. It was that of a woman, a mulatto, of about Isabella's age. Her features were sharp and cunning in their expression, her eyes sparkling with excitement and a keen treachery, and her teeth, white and regular, gleaming brightly through her yellow lips. She watched the retiring forms of Solorgne and Isabella with a look half triumphant and half malignant, plucking a rose from its stem, as she did so, and tearing it to fragments as if with a fiendish pleasure. Then striking the air with clenched hand, and moving her lips as if speaking in her thoughts, she turned and stole silently away by another path.

CHAPTER XI.

A NORTHERN MAN IN THE SOUTH.

“  TOP right there. Its no use your tryin' to persuade me that slavery's right from Scripter. I've heard Scripter quoted in favor of too many wrongs and cryin' evils afore. The fault's not in the Bible, but in them that undertakes to expound it. Bad men read the Word as well as good men, and it really does seem sometimes as if they got the most comfort from it. It depends, I've sometimes thought, on the heart of the man whether he extracts honey or pisen from it, jist as the same medicine kills or cures accordin' to the condition and disease of him that takes it. No, Parson, you preachers may argue the right of one man to buy and sell another man from the blessed Gospel to-day, and another day, when the wind changes from the South to the North, you may find jist as many texts on t'other side of the question. If I wus abettin' man, as I were in my younger days, and your cloth wusn't in the way, I wouldn't mind wagerin' a good round sum that, afore twenty years' out, the clergy of New England, who now find so much that's unscriptural in abolitionism, will be preachin' jist as strong agin the abominations of African slavery. The fact is, there's some nat'r'l reason in this matter, and it teaches me that no man has the born right to treat me like his horse, whether my skin's black or white ; and I tell you, Parson, that if anybody'd go to take away my wife and children on the ground that they wus his'n and not mine, because I was created for

the slave and he was created for the master, and would undertake to quote Scripter to prove it, I'd drive the texts back into his mouth ; I would by—— Wa'al ! I declare, if I didn't come near swearin' !

“To me,” continued the speaker, after recovering from the interruption into which the threatened slip of the tongue had involved him, “it looks like a perversion of the Good Book to set it up in defence of anything so unnatural. The Good Lord didn’t give us hearts and intellects for nothin’, and I don’t see no use of our surrenderin’ our plainest convictions to suit the ideas of either preachers or politicians, who seem, somehow, to agree mighty well in findin’ out what’s pop’ler, and accommodatin’ themselves to it. For one, I don’t propose to be frightened by the cry of ‘abolitionism’ into sayin’ a thing’s right, which I believe to be wrong. Our fathers started out with the idea that all men wus created equal, and the Bible says they’ll all stand on the same levil in the end ; and its all useless your tryin’ to persuade me the race has got divided up into property and property-owners atween the two extremes. I respect your callin’, but I wouldn’t give a straw for your teachin’.”

The above specimen of plain and homely talk was addressed by Farmer Josiah Brown to the Reverend Mr. Sunnyman, pastor of an interior New England congregation, about the time the anti-slavery agitation began to disturb and divide the minds of men in that section of the country.

The farmer’s wife being a member of the Rev. Mr. Sunnyman’s congregation, and the farmer himself one of the most substantial and influential men of the neighborhood, the reverend gentleman made free in his calls at the farmstead, and hoped soon to number its head among the recognized pillars of his church. The conversation,

from which I have given a significant passage, occurred in the parlor or best room of the house, on the occasion of one of these visits, and had incidentally turned upon the subject which was then beginning to absorb so large a share of public attention. The Rev. Mr. Sunnyman adopted with considerable warmth the view which was at that time the most popular concerning the justice of negro slavery, and expressed very decided disapprobation of such as chose to avow a contrary opinion. To his great surprise, he failed to find in the farmer a sympathiser with himself and the public generally. And upon that individual declaring his conviction that slavery was wrong, the pastor had undertaken to disabuse his mind of such a dangerous heresy by quoting a few passages of Scripture calculated, as he believed, to prove the divinity of the disputed system. The response has just been given.

The result of the discussion was, that the Rev. Mr. Sunnyman, on the next Sabbath, preached an unusually forcible sermon upon the great absorbing question. His discourse abounded in Scriptural quotations, and his remarks, which were usually of a very mild and persuasive character, on this occasion grew warm with denunciations and threatenings of wrath when he came to speak of those whose fanaticism endangered the harmony of Church and State. It was noticed that, as he reached this portion of his discourse, his remarks seemed to be directed more especially towards the farmer's pew, which, as a consequence, for many Sabbaths thereafter remained unoccupied. From that time forward, Farmer Brown became known to his neighbors as an "abolitionist," and was criticised accordingly ; although it was not observed that his dealings were less upright, nor his manner less kind and hospitable.

As for the Rev. Mr. Sunnyman, he continued to give

warning against the insidious and growing doctrine until it had acquired such strength as made it formidable in both Church and State, and even threatened the disruption of his own congregation ; when he began to see matters in quite a different light, and was enabled to find texts upon the other side of the question. So rapidly did his conversion go forward, that he was, soon after, moved to preach a powerful discourse against the iniquity of one man holding another in bondage, quoting largely from the Scriptures to sustain his position.

During the conversation referred to, and which involved such lasting consequences, Charles Brown, the farmer's only son, a lad of fourteen or fifteen summers, was present, and a deeply-interested listener. Under the influence of such parental teaching, it is not strange that, when the boy had become a man, he entertained opinions decidedly adverse to slavery, and, like his father, he was in no wise reticent in their expression. At school and college they involved him in numerous controversies, and on one occasion led to a personal encounter between him and the son of a Southern planter, who addressed him in a grossly insolent manner on account of his unpopular views. A blow from the young New Englander, in return for the insult, laid his defamer sprawling in the dust. The college faculty, being very anxious to retain the good opinion of their Southern patrons, required Charles to apologize in an abject manner to his adversary. He refused, and was expelled from the institution. With the disgrace of a college expulsion, and an unvarnished statement of the facts, he presented himself at his father's fireside.

"Right, Charles, right!" exclaimed the old farmer enthusiastically, after listening to a history of the affair, as he seized his son by the hand. "You did right, boy ;

I'm proud of you. You're a chip of the old block, and that's sound timber, if it is rough and crooked. Always stand up for your principles, if you do have to fight for them."

At the date of the events narrated in the preceding chapters, Farmer Brown had been gathered to his fathers in the village churchyard, and Charles had come both to his father's and to man's estate. It so happened, likewise, that he then found himself at a great distance from his New England home. This latter circumstance was owing to the fact that his mother, who was still living, had had an only brother who, some years before, had gone to New Orleans in the expectation that a fortune could there be more rapidly accumulated than in his native State of Massachusetts. In that respect his anticipations had been realized. His Yankee tact and energy soon enabled him to accumulate a handsome property in his new home ; but, before he had time to enjoy it, he was carried off by a two days' attack of yellow fever, the scourge of Southern cities. Having been too busy with money-making to get married, his estate, upon his death, went, by operation of law, to his only sister, the widow of Farmer Brown. That good old lady was alike grieved and perplexed to hear of what the world pronounced her "good fortune"—grieved on account of the loss of her only and much-loved brother, and perplexed to know what to do with her unexpected prize.

It was out of the question for Mrs. Brown to go in person to New Orleans to look after her interests ; her neighbors told her the lawyers there were terribly dishonest, as has, in fact, been said of them in other places ; and, as for her son Charles, he was the apple of her eye. To send him in the footsteps of her ill-fated brother to a place as full of physical and moral dangers as New

Orleans was represented to her to be, seemed to her like sending him to the grave, if not to something worse. In this emergency, Charles, who was anxious to see something of the world, by laughing at his mother's fears on his account, decided the question according to his wishes, but much against her will. She finally consented that he might go South, upon a promise that he was to return as soon as his business was concluded; and with many prayers and tears saw him depart.

At the period my story fairly opens, Charles had succeeded, by close attention to the matter in hand, in so arranging the affairs of his deceased uncle's estate that his presence in New Orleans was no longer necessary. He had fixed a day for his departure, and had written to his mother to that effect.

During the few months of his stay in the Southern metropolis, his mind being occupied with the one purpose of his visit, he had made no general acquaintance, and had avoided, rather than sought, admission to fashionable society. Among the few persons with whom he had become intimate, was another young New Englander who had settled in New Orleans, of the name of Henry Maxwell. Congeniality of tastes and the attraction of a common nativity had made fast friends of the two young men.

"So, Brown, you are determined to leave us next week? I am surprised at such a resolution, when New Orleans offers so many inducements to a man of your energy and capacity to remain."

"Such, Maxwell, is my purpose. A stronger inducement than any this city offers calls me back to my old home."

"A woman in the case, I'll venture. Nothing else would be powerful enough to take you away from such brilliant prospects as you have here opened up to you."

"Yes, there is a woman in the case. My mother is in

New England, and I am bound by a solemn promise made her to return there as soon as the one object of my coming here was accomplished."

"Well, if that is the case, I see no way of keeping you, except by setting the counter attraction of a young woman against that of an old one. And, by the way, while I think of it, there is to be a grand hop to-morrow night at the house of a friend of mine, one of the richest and most prominent of New Orleans' citizens; and I have influence enough to secure you an invitation. All of the first-class fashionables will be there. You must go. There is no telling what may come of it, when you behold the marvels of the enchanted land."

Charles could assign no sufficient reason why he should not go, and so the proposed arrangement was made.

On the evening referred to, the two friends made their way to the place of entertainment, a stately mansion, which they found brilliantly illuminated and filled with the best society, so called, of the great city. Nearly all present were strangers to Brown.

"‘Eligible,’ I suppose, is the word in introducing you,” whispered Maxwell, when they found themselves in that brilliant assembly. “I shall look for the best the market affords. Ha! here is the very thing—an article which everybody recommends—a combination of wealth, beauty, and the very bluest aristocracy. That tall young lady standing beneath the chandelier yonder, is a representative of one of the oldest and richest families. She is considered very attractive.”

“An opinion in which I should say the lady herself fully coincided,” replied Brown with an indifferent glance.

The person referred to was a stately beauty, whose cold and haughty bearing showed clearly enough her own estimate of the importance of her position.

“ Shall I introduce you ? ”

“ No, thank you ! my fancy does not happen to run in that channel. Blood and money are very well in their way, but I should like some evidence of heart where I am expected to bestow my admiration.”

“ Well, then, if you do not approve of that style, here is something else to offer you of quite another description. You see, seated on an ottoman across the room, that splendid combination of silks, laces, pearls, gems, flowers and so forth. A little too much toilet, perhaps, to suit everybody’s taste, but the wearer can afford to cover herself with diamonds if she chooses. You notice that a dozen moths are fluttering about that flame, which proves there is something very seductive there. Its not blood, certainly, for her father came to New Orleans a runaway ship boy, and was for a time a porter in a warehouse. He now owns whole blocks of buildings, and is one of the most extensive slave-holders in the State. There ought to be some sympathy between you, for her father was a New Englander born and bred.”

“ And is now one of the most extensive slave-holders in Louisiana ; I would beg to be excused.”

This was said by Brown with a significant shrug of the shoulders.

“ Well, I declare, I hardly know what to do for you,” said Brown’s companion laughingly. “ There’s something very fascinating over there—now coming this way—that graceful black-haired girl leaning on the arm of that tall, aristocratic gentleman. She is first-class in every respect ; comes of an old family ; blood pure Castilian ; an heiress in her own right ; and, besides, is said to be a good daughter and kind mistress—but she’s bespoke. The tall man with whom she is promenading is to be her husband. Its a family affair ; agreed on

about the time the parties were born. So there's no use of bestowing any further attention in that quarter."

Brown turned his eyes indifferently in the direction of the person who had elicited these remarks. The first glance, he hardly knew why, awakened his interest. She was not beautiful in the sense in which a ball-room belle might be expected to dazzle. Rather slight in figure, a brunette, with dark and wavy hair, a not very fair complexion, and eyes large and almost pensive in their expression, her appearance was suggestive of quiet dignity; but there was, at the same time, something singularly sweet and engaging in her countenance.

Her companion was evidently her senior by several years. He, however, needs no description in this place. He was Ruy Grandaville.

Brown suffered his eyes to follow the two, steadily and without comment, for some minutes; when, turning to his friend, he surprised him by remarking:

"I should like an introduction to that lady."

"After what I have told you?" replied Maxwell. "But that is as you choose. You shall be gratified the first opportunity that offers, which cannot be long deferred. Her companion will soon be seeking the card tables, which, if report speaks truly, interest him more than the society of his prospective bride. There, he is excusing himself, and will be out of the way immediately. Now is our chance, while the lady is disengaged."

Following the introduction came the usual common-places, and then a conversation in which Brown spoke of his intended departure for the North.

"So you are about to leave us so soon," remarked the lady pleasantly. "You surprise me not a little. The majority of your people visiting our city, find so much that is attractive that they conclude to remain and iden-

tify themselves with us. Why should you prove an exception?"

"To be perfectly candid, there are some things I am compelled to see here that I very much dislike," was Brown's reply.

"You probably refer to the relation existing between master and slave."

"I do."

"I am astonished——"

"At my indiscretion in speaking on such a subject."

"Not at all; but that such a sentiment should come from a New England man."

"It is my turn to be astonished."

"Then you may understand," replied Brown's companion with a musical laugh, "that although I have heard a great deal about New England abolitionists, and certainly not much in their favor, you are positively the first New Englander I ever met who did not avow himself enamored of our 'peculiar institution!' I had almost come to the conclusion that you cunning Yankees, in coming South, ingeniously contrived to leave your Northern opinions at home, and adopted new ones, on arriving here, better suited to our climate.

"So far," she went on, "from the sentiment you have avowed being disagreeable to me, it is one which I fully share."

Brown was wholly unable to withhold a look of surprise, accompanied with enough admiration to make it tolerable in his companion's eyes.

"I thought it not unlikely," he remarked, "that you were yourself interested in the disputed system."

"So I am," she replied, "and that is what has made me question its justice. It has taught me that the people I am accustomed to call my slaves, are far too kind and

true to be treated like so much merchandise. It may surprise you to hear me say that, next to my own father, whom I have all my life loved more than anybody else, the person holding the highest place in my affection is a slave. I call her ‘mamma,’ and she has honestly earned the title. My mother died before a time I can recollect, and dear old mamma, who was my nurse, has been so faithful and loving—I don’t believe there’s anything in her power she would not do for me—that I can’t help thinking it wrong that she should remain in servitude. But these things cannot interest you.”

They did interest Brown, however, and so deeply, that the conversation was protracted unusually for a ball-room conference. At its conclusion the lady politely invited him to call upon her at her residence, an invitation which he very cheerfully accepted. For the balance of the evening, although he lingered amid the pleasure-seekers, he made no further acquaintance, and greatly puzzled his friend Maxwell by his unaccountable reticence.

The day which Brown had selected for his departure came, and still he remained where he was. Another and another followed, until the time lengthened into weeks, with the same result. He had at first written to his mother that he would be detained a few days beyond what he had anticipated, without assigning any cause. Next he wrote that some “little matters” would occasion further delay, but that he would be home very soon. Again and again he found himself compelled to communicate what he knew would be most unwelcome intelligence, without being able to give any reason that he felt would be satisfactory. Presuming upon his mother’s ignorance of business details, he left her to infer that the condition of his deceased uncle’s estate was the cause of his detention; meanwhile, to allay what he supposed

would be her most serious apprehension, assuring her in every letter that he was in perfect bodily health.

That excellent old lady, besides putting the house in thorough order, had been busy with the preparation of certain delicacies of the table which a New England housewife, of the old school, knows so well how to provide, all of which were carefully set aside to await her son's arrival. When he failed to appear according to her expectation, she had upon her mind a double anxiety—the safety of her son and the care of her treasured luxuries. As the time of waiting lengthened from days to weeks, her solicitude became excessive. Day and night she fretted herself, until, but for that strength of body and will which an active life had supplied, she would have been wholly prostrate. Her most painful reflection was upon herself for having consented that Charles should leave her in quest of that wealth which had been destructive to her only brother, and which, she was now almost persuaded, would be equally destructive to her only son. That her boy could, in any way, be intentionally responsible for the cause of her anxiety, she never for a moment supposed.

Equally mystified was Henry Maxwell. He knew, what the old lady did not, that there was no business necessity detaining Charles, and he was aware of no other inducement sufficiently powerful to overcome his oft-expressed desire to reach his Northern home.

"Tell me, Brown, what has come over you," said Maxwell one evening, as the two friends were sitting near each other, several weeks after the main incidents herein-before recorded. "I can't understand you at all of late. You seem altogether like another man. A short time ago you were fully resolved on hurrying back to New England, and here you are, weeks after the time you had selected

for your departure. Your manner is changed, too. Instead of being all life and energy as before, you now seem almost misanthropic. What can be the trouble? Your business, I know, is satisfactorily arranged. You do not appear to be contemplating any new venture. You avoid society. Since that affair of three or four weeks ago, you have absolutely refused to bear me company to any more fashionable gatherings. I know you don't dissipate. In short, I am completely bewildered by your conduct. Believe me, when I say, that I do not inquire out of idle curiosity, but with the hope and desire that I may in some way be able to serve you."

"I believe I am bewitched," was Brown's reply.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRIANGLE BUILDING AND THE CONTRABAND SCHOOL.

 AM now compelled, in the development of my story, to ask the reader to accompany me to one of the most uninviting districts of New Orleans. Entering a portion of the city which was almost entirely given up to foreigners and free persons of color, we would, at the period with which I am dealing, have come to a building which then made, and possibly it may do so still, a conspicuous feature in its neighborhood. It stood at a point where two streets came together in such a way as to leave an acute angle between them. Built upon the tongue of ground at its narrowest extremity, it became known, from its peculiar shape, as the "Triangle Building," and in the neighborhood was spoken of simply as the "Triangle." Although it had been constructed with some architectural pretension, the "Triangle," at the time of which I am writing, had lost all claim to outward respectability. It was old, weather-beaten, and sadly exhibited its participation in the blight of a degenerate locality: its windows were broken, filthy, and spotted with numerous substitutes for glass; its cornice was ragged with great seams, and many of its doors and window-shutters hung by crippled hinges; its walls were garbage-stained; and everything about it was suggestive of evil days.

Internally, there was nothing to redeem its character. The entire building had been given up to renters of the

poorer sort. The first or ground floor was occupied by shops supplied with very limited capital. There was a saloon for the sale of indescribable liquors ; a pawn-broker's establishment with its three balls of golden promise, in this instance considerably tarnished ; a receptacle for old clothes and second-hand furniture ; a barber-shop with its serpentine pole, and the additional sign of the barber himself lounging or sleeping for the greater part of the time in the chair intended for customers ; a variety store whose assortment included meat, vegetables and hardware ; and one or two other establishments of a nondescript order.

The building was four stories high, and in that respect obtained prominence in a neighborhood where the structures were generally low and small. Above the first floor the rooms were let to families ; but here it was a noticeable fact, that the tenantry, which appeared remarkably populous, was composed almost exclusively of persons, in whole or part, of African lineage.

With such a population inside, it is easy to judge of the throng which frequented the streets adjoining. Negroes were here often to be seen collected in such crowds as quite to occupy the sidewalks. On pleasant days, especially, there were bevies of juveniles, in which every shade was represented, from the purest black to a single remove from unmixed Caucasian.

There were two street fronts to the building, facing the two avenues that made the long sides of the triangle. Running through the structure from street to street were several narrow halls, with a door or entrance on each street, through which the tenants of the upper stories secured access to their quarters. Ascending from these halls were narrow, rickety and generally filthy stairways. It will thus be seen that the building was, in fact, a row

of tenement houses, regularly varying in depth according to the distance they were located from the point of junction between the streets, or in one sense the apex of the triangle.

The reader, being made acquainted with the construction of the building, or rather succession of houses which, being under one roof, were known by the designation of the "Triangle," will be prepared to follow the incidents now about to be related, and which, without such knowledge, might only lead to confusion in his mind.

Not long after the day first fixed upon by Charles Brown for taking his departure from New Orleans, a plainly, but neatly, attired female might have been seen to enter that quarter of the city to which the reader has just been introduced. That she was young, would be inferred from the lightness and energy of her step ; but of her countenance no very definite idea could be formed on account of the long, narrow bonnet she was wearing, then popularly called a "shaker." It quite hid her features, and might very well have been purposely adopted for disguise. She proceeded with a rapid step directly to the point where the "Triangle" stood ; passed partly along one side of the building ; then quickly entered one of the doorways spoken of ; glided along the narrow hall to the foot of the stairway, and ascended from floor to floor, until she had reached the upper story, where she disappeared through a door that opened on her right hand as she went up, carefully closing it behind her.

About the same hour, on the same day, a young man might have been seen to approach the same point by another street. He, likewise, proceeded rapidly, and in a manner which might have suggested the idea of a desire to avoid recognition. His features were shaded by a broad-brimmed Panama hat, so drawn down over his face

as to quite hide all of it except the lower part. His destination, as it proved, as well as the lady's, was the old "Triangle Building." Here, however, taking the sidewalk on the other side of the building from the one she had just passed over, he entered the hall next beyond the one she had entered, ascended rapidly to the upper floor, and there disappeared through a door on his right hand, but which, on account of the direction from which he approached it, admitted him to the same room the lady had entered but a few minutes before. It will thus be seen that, owing to the peculiar construction of the old tenement building, the room in question could be reached from two streets, by means of separate halls and separate doors, and in such a way that a person watching one passage, might know nothing of a person approaching or escaping by the other.

Once inside the room the lady hastened to remove her bonnet, and, in so doing, revealed the same pleasant, thoughtful countenance which, at the first glance, had so interested Charles Brown on the night of the social gathering to which he had been persuaded to go by his friend Maxwell. In this she was by no means unobserved ; for as soon as the door was closed behind her, a motley collection of children, who had apparently been anxiously awaiting her appearance, not noisily, but eagerly, crowded around her with an enthusiastic, joyous greeting. Almost every shade of color was there, from the deep black to the light octoroon ; all, however, betraying some African kinship. They were of all ages, from the child of six to the youth almost grown to womanhood or manhood. Their garments were as various in fashion and texture as were their ages and complexions. In one thing only did they appear to agree, and that was the satisfaction with which they hailed the new-comer. As for the lady herself, her

gratification at the meeting seemed almost to equal theirs. She stooped down and kissed two or three of the smaller ones that clamored importunately about her, and spoke a pleasant word to all.

While she was yet in the midst of the happy throng that had given her so hearty a welcome, the door opposite the one by which she had entered swung open, and in walked the gentleman who was seen approaching by the other passage. As he did so, he removed the hat which had so effectually hidden his features, and Charles Brown, for he it was, bowed politely to the lady in the midst of her demonstrative friends, and addressed a kind "Good morning" to the others.

The reader will, by this time, be pretty well able to infer the object which had brought parties so dissimilar in all their circumstances together in that remarkable place and manner. A glance round the room, had any question remained, would have told the balance of the story. The apartment was long and narrow, extending lengthwise the entire width of the building. A consequence was that, from windows at the ends, a view was to be had of the two streets forming the triangle. No better location to observe the approach of a hostile party could have been selected. At either end of the apartment was a small platform, on which stood table and chair, while a row of plain wooden benches nearly filled up the intermediate space. On the wall, at one side, was a large blackboard. It was easy enough to be seen that the room was used for school purposes.

Charles was the first to call attention to the business which had brought them there.

"It is time, Miss Castellos, we were proceeding with the exercises of the day. Are our pupils all assembled?"

An affirmative answer having been returned by her

who was addressed as Miss Castellos, all present took their places, the teachers the seats upon the platforms, and the scholars, divided according to sex, the benches in the central portion of the room.

The recitations and instructions proceeded rapidly and orderly. Only the more simple elements of learning were attempted to be taught, and those in the plainest and fewest words.

Altogether it was a most singular spectacle. Not the least curious feature resulted from the unequal advancement of the pupils. The smaller scholars were frequently by far the most proficient. Not only did the darkest skinned mingle on terms of perfect familiarity with the fairest present, but young men and young women stood side by side with mere children in laborious efforts to master the alphabet.

While it was evident enough that none but the most limited opportunity had been enjoyed by any of them, all the scholars seemed eager to learn, and not a few displayed remarkable aptitude. The looks of undisguised elation which lit up their countenances, when some more than ordinarily difficult point had been mastered, brought smiles even to the grave visage of their New England teacher, to whom the scene had not yet altogether lost its novelty.

But the highest evidence of progress was to be seen in the superior appearance and bearing of those in attendance, when brought into contrast with their companions of the surrounding streets. Coarse, and even ragged, as their apparel often was, it furnished signs of unaccustomed care, and their manner was characterized by a confidence and courtesy which showed the infusion of new ideas and new hopes. Through their efforts the school-room was swept and polished until it had become

almost cheerful in its cleanliness, and, in the expression of a newly-awakened taste, even rude attempts at adornment had been made. At various points throughout the apartment branches and garlands of evergreen had been fastened to the walls, or suspended overhead ; while upon Miss Castellos' table, the joint contribution of a number of little hands, sparkled a fragrant bouquet, brilliant with gaudy flowers, which seemed as strangely out of place in that locality as did the lady herself. In such things was the influence of a work, which was, to the performers, a labor of love, chiefly to be seen, proving affection to be far the best teacher. Kindness was of more account, under the circumstances, than learning. What those despised ones most needed, was the instruction which came from the heart rather than from the head. Their greatest incentive was the recognition of an equal humanity. All the knowledge the world contains, crammed into the brain of one who feels that he is a subordinate and inferior, would never raise him to the grade of a man.

A few hours sufficed to go through the customary exercises, at the conclusion of which, Charles, who assumed the chief direction, addressed a few words of commendation and advice to the children, and then dismissed them to their homes. One at a time, and without noise or confusion, they passed out of the two doors already spoken of, and melted so gradually and imperceptibly into the variegated mass of humanity that was always collected in and around the "Triangle Building," that an ordinary observer would have noticed no addition to its numbers. There was none of that exuberance and recklessness ordinarily displayed by children on such occasions. On the contrary, the avoidance of everything calculated to attract attention, showed how sensible all were of the danger to which they and their instructors were exposed. For it

must be known that the work in which Charles Brown and his coadjutor were engaged, however commendable in itself, was one so liable to arouse the suspicious temper of a jealous slave-holding community, that not only its success, but its continued prosecution, depended entirely upon the secrecy with which it was conducted. None realized this fact more clearly than the children themselves, who had been taught, with the first bitter lessons of a hard life, that they belonged to a proscribed race, and that learning, like the majority of luxuries they enjoyed, was to be acquired only by stealth. Caution with them, in the presence of their superiors, seemed almost an instinct. It had been the lesson of every hour they lived.

Light-hearted as the negroes, taken as a people, unquestionably are, it is a mistake to suppose they were ever given to noise and gayety where slavery has prevailed. The pictures which have been so often drawn of boisterous meeting and hilarity among plantation-slaves are pleasant, but baseless, fictions, owing their origin to the imaginations of the master-race. The songs—and songs are always the truest expression of a people's heart—in which the negroes, in their dependence, gave utterance to their freest thoughts, were low and plaintive; sweet because of the tone of sadness with which they were pervaded. Living under the shadow of a wrong scarcely understood, but realized almost from birth, they early learned to put the rein upon their tongues. Knowing that they were under constant surveillance themselves, the very air they breathed was full of suspicion. With nothing in their lives to inspire confidence, they would have suffered all the pains of martyrdom before betraying a member of their own race, or one whom they believed to be a true friend to their race.

All the pupils had taken their quiet departure, except one. That one, a tall and graceful girl of some fifteen years of age, a mulatto, and a scholar of more than ordinary sprightliness, as well as of prepossessing appearance, lingered behind. Rhoda, for that was her name, had become an especial favorite with Miss Castellos, both on account of her intelligence and the gratitude she displayed for the favors she had received. She now stood with downcast eyes and timid manner, as if something was upon her mind which she dreaded to communicate. Noticing her embarrassment, Miss Castellos asked her kindly to speak out.

"What is it, Rhoda? Speak freely. We will gladly hear you, and help you, if we can."

"O! Missey Castellos, you'se too good. I'se not deservin' ob such kindness at your hands, fur—fur I'se bery, bery mis'rable."

Here the poor girl could restrain her tears no longer, and for some minutes sobbed too violently for further utterance. But, quieted at length by the kind things said to her, she became sufficiently composed to tell her story.

"Long as ole Massa lib, I'se neber hab no trouble. He whip de oders, but he allers say pleasant tings to me, an' let me go purty much whar I'se pleased. Dat's de way I come to dis here school. I'se neber den taught much 'bout ben free, dough de more I'se learned, de more I'se taught sometime I'd like to be my own missey. But ole Massa, he die little while 'go, an' young Massa, ole Massa's son, gets de property an' de niggers, an' den comes de trouble.

"At fust young Massa bery cleber. He lits on to be pleased, an' smiles, an' says nice tings when we meets. Den he sends fur me, an' tells me I war such a purty gal, an' dat he'd neber make me do no hard work, but dat

I'se must do eberyting he wants. Den he says tings I'se 'shamed to tell. When I'se says 'No,' he axes why. I'se says 'cause 'twan't right. Den he grows mad, an' wants to know what puts such notions in my head, sayin' dat if he only knowed who war a teachin' de niggers to be 'bove dar places, he'd 'tend to dem. He goes on an' says dat niggers war made fur de use ob de white folks ; dat dey war nuffin but property nohow ; an' dat dey hab no bizness with minds ob dar own.

"When I'se still keeps sayin' 'No,' he riles up an' says dat if one way wouldn't work, another would. Den he lets me go fur sev'ral days, an' I'se 'cludes de trouble's ober. But, O! Missey Castellos, den war when Massa war fixin' fur de wust.

"All at once he says he hab lost de fine ring he war wearin', an' dar war great searchin' an' huntin' fur it all ober de house, Massa all de time swearin' what he war gwine to do to de thief when he war cotched. Dey searched all de oders fust, an' de ring warn't found nowhar. Den Massa goes inter my room, an' comes out lookin' bery black, with de ring in his hand, sayin' as how he'd found it in de pocket ob one ob my dresses, dough de Lord knows I'd neber seed it 'cept on Massa's own finger. Den he sends all de oders 'way, an' talks 'bout de dreadful tings he war gwine to do to me, sayin' he didn't b'lieve one word, when I'se cries an' says I'se didn't know nuffin 'bout de ring. Arter while he 'peared to grow sorry like, an' b'gin to say he didn't want to punish me, an' dat if I'd be de cleber gal he asks, he'd say nuffin more 'bout de ring ; but dat if I'se turned obstinate, he'd half whip de life out, an' send me to de auction fur to be sold to de sugar plantation. Den I falls down on my knees, an' tells him what my mudder tells me ; dat his fadder an' my fadder war de same, an' dat we war brudder

an' sister, an' begs him to hab mercy fur de sake ob de ole Massa dat war gone. He only laugh in my face, an' say he didn't care who my fadder war ; dat all he cared fur war myself ; but dat he'd gib me twenty-four hours to tink 'bout it an' gib him an answer. Dem twenty-four hours am up dis bery arternoon, an', O ! Missey Castellos, Missey Castellos ! what is I'se gwine to do ? what is I'se gwine to do ? "

The poor girl had fallen on her knees, and buried her face in her teacher's dress. Charles and Miss Castellos exchanged glances, the eyes of the latter half blinded with tears, and those of the former burning with illy suppressed indignation.

Brown was the first to speak.

" My detestation of a system which puts one human being absolutely in the power of another is so great that, to this moment, I never have supposed it possible that I could consent to become a party to the purchase of a fellow-creature. But if, by buying this poor girl, I could secure her escape from that brutal master and give her freedom, I feel that I could overcome my scruples. What think you, Miss Castellos ; could I accomplish her deliverance in that way ? "

Miss Castellos, thus appealed to, shook her head sadly.

" I fear the attempt would be unavailing," she replied. " Money would probably be but a slight temptation in the eyes of a person as self-willed as Rhoda's master. Your interference would only make him the more determined in his purpose, besides bringing suspicion on yourself."

" Then what can we do ? " asked Brown.

To this question there was no answer, Miss Castellos being evidently as much at a loss as the inquirer. A painful silence ensued. Rhoda herself was the first to suggest what promised a solution of the difficulty.

"I'se heard tell," she began somewhat hesitatingly, "ob a place, somewhar 'way up in de Norf, whar all de cullud folks is free ; an' dey says dat de darkies dat am slaves sometimes runs off an' gets dar. Oh! I'd risk whippin', an' cold, an' starvin', an' eberyting to reach dat place, if you'se only show me de way. But," she added after a slight pause, "would it be right fur me to run 'way? I'se a slave—Massa's prop'ty. Wouldn't it be like takin' his ring without his 'sent, if I'se war to go?"

"Go! go!" exclaimed Miss Castellos impulsively. "Heaven will forgive such robbery, and may it help you to reach the land of deliverance you speak of in safety."

It now took but a few minutes to decide upon a plan of action. Miss Castellos undertook to conceal the slave-girl in her own house, until some means of escape from the city could be devised. Brown, on his part, expressed the belief that he could secure a passage for her with the captain of a ship about to sail Northward, the impression being conveyed, as far as could consistently be done, that she was a free person.

This matter arranged, the parties left the schoolroom separately, and by the same passages by which they had been seen to enter the old "*Triangle Building*."

CHAPTER XIII.

LOWLY LOVERS.

HE sudden appearance and singular conduct of the mulatto woman or girl, who stood watching the departing forms of Solorgne and Isabella, at the conclusion of the interview in the flower-garden heretofore described, which brought them to an understanding of each other's feelings, require an explanation.

The person who had been playing spy upon the lovers was a slave belonging to the plantation, known as Yellow Jule. The expression of mingled cunning and malevolence her countenance betrayed on the occasion referred to, showed that she had inherited the worst properties of the two races from which she was descended. But a mere love of evil, and a propensity to pry into others' secrets, would hardly account for the look of intense hatred with which her eyes followed the retiring forms. Another passion was at work—one no less powerful and dangerous than Jealousy.

Of Isabella, it would not be presumed, that one so far inferior as the mulatto evidently was, could be a rival; although both, as has now been made to appear, were slaves, and the property of one master. The rivalry which, in this instance, was the cause of ill-feeling, had for its object Isabella's waiting-maid, a negress of unmixed blood, of the somewhat inappropriate name of Rose.

Rose was a clever, merry girl of some sixteen summers,

whose warm heart had won for her a high place in Isabella's affections. The result of such preference was that, being made a personal attendant upon her mistress, slave though the mistress was like herself, she became the happy recipient of many tokens of regard in the way of dresses and jewelry, a rather ostentatious display of which failed not to excite the animosity of some of her fellow-servants. The superior privileges enjoyed by Rose, would have been enough to make Yellow Jule her enemy, had no other cause of irritation existed. But there was another and much deeper provocation. Rose had secured the unmistakable preference of Jefferson, the acknowledged Apollo of the plantation.

Jefferson was a negro of undoubted purity of descent. Tradition said that his father had been an African king, who had been brought to America on a slaver. It was certain that his fellow-bondsmen looked upon him as, in some respect, greatly their superior. His commands were as cheerfully obeyed by them as if he had been their master, instead of a slave like themselves. His appearance and bearing, as far as such things could do, justified his claim to royalty. He was fully six feet in height, magnificently proportioned, and carried himself with an air of great dignity and conscious worth. Nor were his pretensions without some justification in his deserts, notwithstanding his menial position. He was singularly quick as a mechanic, and his skill was almost invaluable on the plantation. The judgment he displayed in all matters coming under his supervision and his authority over his fellow-servants, soon pointed him out as one who could safely be trusted with responsibility ; and Isabella, to whose direction Grandaville left everything in his absence, had selected him as her principal assistant in the management of the plantation. Never was trust more

faithfully discharged ; for Jefferson, exacting as he was from those of his own color, was ever ready to execute the slightest wish he could gather from his whiter mistress' lips with a zeal and promptitude proving the sincerest devotion.

It will thus be seen that Jefferson was a person of considerable consequence, and Yellow Jule obeyed a very natural preference in aspiring to his good graces. All of her advances were unavailing ; partly because Jefferson, proud of his unsullied dusky stock, looked with secret disdain upon one whose saffron countenance showed adulteration, and partly because the cheerful, buxom Rose had taken full possession of his heart.

The last-mentioned fact was attributed by the disappointed and enraged mulatto, not so much to Rose's superior personal attractions, as to the advantages she enjoyed through her mistress' favor. To one of her jealous, malignant spirit, that was quite enough to arouse a feeling of bitter resentment against the mistress as well as against the maid, and make her ready and eager to seize the first favorable opportunity for doing her an injury.

With the acuteness for which many of her class are distinguished, she had reached the conclusion that the young Frenchman's repeated appearances at the plantation meant more than friendship for the master. Accordingly, she watched every movement of Solorgne and Isabella with the sharpness of a practiced detective. She had, on the occasion heretofore described,^{*} seen them enter the garden, and quickly placed herself in the most favorable position to discover all that transpired. The thickly-growing shrubbery favored her purpose, and, having heard every word that passed, she was fully advised as to the lovers' contemplated flight. The look of almost

fiendish satisfaction that lighted up her sharp, sallow features, as she gazed after their receding forms, showed clearly enough that she was rejoicing in the prospect of coming revenge.

But that day was not alone to be an important one to Solorgne and Isabella. Others on the Grandaville plantation were, at the same time, gaining a knowledge that to them was of equal interest.

For a considerable time back, Rose had discovered alarming indications of a growing coldness on Jefferson's part. Such a phenomenon she was wholly unable to account for, and no artifice to which she could resort had extracted the secret from her moody lover. In her distress of mind she applied to Isabella for sympathy and counsel. The latter advised her, as there ought to be no secrets between affianced lovers, to speak frankly to Jefferson of her mistrust. Circumstances that day had favored such design. Her mistress had, upon the arrival of Solorgne, probably with a view to removing as many inquisitive eyes as possible, sent her with a commission to a distant portion of the plantation. On the way, she encountered Jefferson. She found him more reserved than ever, but she was not to be put off with either frown or absent look. She demanded to know the meaning of his altered conduct, and, as a passionate burst of tears accompanied the request, it was very natural that her lover's coldness should partially yield to her persistency.

"Dar'se some oder one you'se ben tinkin' 'bout. I'se knows dar is from de way you'se ben carryin' on ob late. Dar'se no use ob you'se denyin' it; cause why should you'se keep 'way so much ob de time, an' look on de groun' when I'se 'bout, if 'twarn't so? I'se not changed t'ward you, an' you'd not change t'ward me if dar war no oder 'traction."

Jefferson's reply was a complete surprise ; as Rose had expected a flat denial to her accusation, which she was only in part prepared to believe herself.

"Yes, Rose, you'se right. Dar is anoder 'traction on which my toughts hab run a great deal ob late. Better you'se should know at once, an' dat we'se should hab understandin' with one anoder. I'se glad you'se hab spoke."

"Dar, I'se knowed it !" exclaimed Rose, breaking, as she spoke, into another flood of tears which her companion made no effort to check. "I'se knowed you war false, from de way you'se ben gwine on. You'se a wicked, 'ceitful, treach'rous nigger ; dat'se what you'se is, but—but—but who am she ?"

"Who am who ?"

"Why, de t'oder 'traction."

Receiving no immediate reply, Rose went on spitefully :

"Some great buty, I'se 'spect—white p'haps—most as purtier as Missey Bella."

"Yes, Rose, she'se bery butiful. She'se white too—white as de angels in de picter books we'se looked ober t'gedder, an' her face am like Heaben itself. She'se far purtier dan Missey Bella, dough dat am sayin' a good deal."

"Lor' a mercy me ! den dar'se no more hope fur poor black Rose." And the tearful girl turned her eyes upward with an agonizing expression. "But whar in de wide world does she lib? I'se sure dar'se nobody purtier dan Missey Bella 'bout dis plantation."

"No, Rose ! she lib a great way off—in de clouds."

"Jefferson, you'se crazy ; talkin' 'bout white folks purtier dan Missey Bella, an' 'bout gwine to de clouds fur some one to lub, when I'se here on de groun'. But what's de name ob dis wonderful buty?"

"Her name am Liberty, Rose. You hab neber seed her, an' but few ob our 'plexion hab. I'se had only glimpses ob her in de stillness ob de night, when I'se ben layin' on de groun', lookin' into de sky an' tryin' to tink ob you. Den somehow or oder her face would come in 'tween you'se an' mine, an' she would look so butiful an' kind, I'se felt like gettin' down on my knees an' prayin' to her."

"O, Jefferson! what does you mean?"

"Dat I'se wants to be free. Its not dat I'se lubs you de less, Rose; fur my 'fection fur you fust started dis new longin' in my heart. When I'se 'gins to tink ob makin' you my wife, I'se says to myself, 'She'll neber be mine long as we'se slaves. She'll still b'long to anoder, who may take her 'way any time he chooses, an' leab me nothin' 'cept vexation an' mis'ry. An' de little children, if Heaben eber bless us with dem, won't be ours neider. Some one comes 'long when we'se learned to lub dem better dan our own selves, an' tears dem from us, an' we neber, neber see dem 'gain.' O, Rose! when I'se tought ob dese tings, my heart hab jess come up into my mouf, an' I'se hab 'clared I'se neber gwine to hab wife nor child long as I'se a slave, neber! neber!"

"But," timidly suggested Rose, frightened by her lover's terrible earnestness, and half convinced of the soundness of his views—"but we war born slaves."

"No, Rose, dat's not so. Heaben made us free. It war de white folks dat make us slaves. Dey stole my fadder an' mudder, an' your fadder an' mudder, way ober in Africa 'fore we war born, an' dey stole you an' me when we war born, an' its ben nuffin' but stealin' eber since. But fur dem, I'd dis day be a king, with a spear huntin' de wild beasts in de country whar I'se b'longs, an' my wife, Rose, would be a queen. 'Stead ob dat,

I'se a ting ob no 'count, 'cept to work Massa's field, like Massa's horse an' ox. Its de white folks' power an' knowledge, not de white folks' right, dat make us slaves. But dar'se one thing dey can't steal," resumed the speaker, after a brief pause, and who, in his agitation, had risen to his feet, and stood before his trembling companion a splendid specimen of a great, nervous man—"an' dat's de lub ob liberty de great God dat made us puts in de soul ; an' sure as he'se de juss God I'se b'lieves him to be, he'll some day make dem dat robs us ob dat liberty pay fur dar 'pression with dar hearts' blood."

"But what," replied Rose, thoroughly alarmed by Jefferson's fierce talk and manner, "hab we to 'plain ob here? Don't Massa gib us eberyting we needs ; an' ain't Missey Bella more like a sister dan anyting else? I'se can't see how we'd be better off, if we war free."

"Dat's true, Rose," responded Jefferson slowly and meditatively. "But 'spose Mass' Grandaville die, or gets into trouble, as dem sort ob folks sometimes does, an' dey sells de plantation an' de slaves. Or 'spose he marry some fine lady, as dey say he'se gwine to do 'fore long—what den comes ob Missey Bella? She am slave, too. 'Haps she be sold to some oder fine gemman. An' when Missey Bella's sold an' gone, what den comes ob de little Rose, with her fine dresses an' grand ways? Answer me dat, will you?"

The picture thus drawn was too much for the simple-hearted girl. She began to weep bitterly, speaking, as she could, through her tears :

"Poor Missey Bella! poor Missey Bella! I'se knowed dar war sumthin' 'stressin' her. She habn't ob late ben t'all like what she used to war. She habn't sung an' played ; an' more'n once I'se seed de tear drops runnin'

down her cheeks, an' when I ax her what's de matter, she jess brush 'way de tear an' neber answer. O, dat wicked Mass' Grandaville ! to tink ob marryin' with Missey Bella here, an' he allers littin' on to lub her so much—de onreasonable, 'ceitful critter ! ”

With this the poor girl broke down completely. Her sobbing became so violent that Jefferson's sympathies were touched, and, to make amends for the pain he had inflicted, he began a series of lover-like endearments that were speedily effective in restoring her to a better frame of mind.

“ Now Rose,” said he, “ its better dat we’se clearly ’stands one anoder. My mind’s made up dat I’ll neber marry in de state ob slavery, neber ! I’se ready to do all I’se ‘greed ; but if we’se marry, it must be on de ‘spres standin’ dat we’se starts at once fur a place ob freedom.”

“ You’se don’t mean dat we’se to run ‘way, does you ? Why dey’ll set de dogs arter us, an’, if dey catch us, dey’ll jess whip de life out.”

“ Yes, Rose, I’se means dat we shall try to reach de land whar de cullud folks is as free as de white folks is. Dar’s plenty cullud folks dat gits dar spite ob de dogs. An’ if dey do catch us, dey can’t do more’n kill us, an’ dat dey’se welcome to do, if dey wants to. Better die dan lib de life ob de slave. Yes, Rose, I’se in earnest. You’se got to make up your mind which you’se gwine to do—run ‘way with me, or stay an’ quit tinkin’ bout Jefferson.”

The climax thus reached was decisive of the question. All the terrors which had arisen in the girl’s mind at thought of the pursuit, the dogs and the whipping, fled before the more dreadful alternative of losing her lover. She hastened to make known her decision.

“ O, Jefferson ! I’d go with you anywhar, if ’twarn’t fur

Missey Bella. I'd risk all de dogs an' de whips ; but when it comes to leavin' Missey Bella, who'se ben so kind an' lubin' ; and she 'stressed an' troubled—dat, dat's sumthin' I'll neber, neber, neber do."

Such manifestations of fidelity and affection so powerfully appealed to Jefferson's sensibilities, that he began to think of compromise. The result of the interview was an agreement that Jefferson should restrain his longing for freedom until such time as Rose could obtain Isabella's consent, or was released from her service, when the two were to unite their fortunes in a resolute attempt to reach a land of liberty.

Everything being thus amicably settled, the world probably contained no happier mortals than those colored lovers, so poor that they did not even own their own persons, and yet rich in boundless affection. Who that could then have seen their glowing countenances, but would have been convinced that hearts as loyal, and sympathies as strong, may find a place beneath the mask of the negro's skin, as dwell in the bosoms of a fairer and more favored race? In the enjoyment of that bliss unspeakable, which follows the restoration of interrupted harmony between spirits that have learned to accord, we must, for the time, leave our sable hero and heroine, to pursue the fortunes of other actors in this tale.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DRAGON'S DEN.

"**I**F I'se owned dat nigger, I'd jess kill him, dough he am my own son."

The object of the above sanguinary observation was our restless acquaintance of a previous chapter, the negro boy Frog, who had been detected in some juvenile indiscretion, and its author, the boy's mother and wife of another of our acquaintances, Dragon. The remark was every way worthy of a drag-oness. The time of its utterance was the early twilight of the day on which the incidents recorded in the last two chapters had transpired, and the place the cabin in which the Dragon family dwelt. The auditory to which the unnatural declaration was addressed, consisted of Dragon, who, being as deaf as the walls of his hut, was totally unconscious of the denunciation pronounced upon his progeny ; another elderly colored female who went by the title of Aunt Rach, being probably an abbreviation of Rachel ; and the mulatto girl Jule.

The cabin in question, which was not inappropriately known as the "Dragon's Den," was one of the most unattractive of its class. It was a structure of one room, without floor save the earth, and with a single window made by sawing a square opening through the logs, and left without glass or sash. A more gloomy quarter could not well have been imagined, particularly at that hour. Nor did the appearance of the inmates relieve the otherwise sombre aspect of the place. The old women, in the

increasing darkness, looked like two resuscitated mummies, and the yellow girl's lighter complexion and sharply-cut features gave her an appearance that was weird and fiendish. The occupation of the elder females added to the unnatural effect, they being busy with their home-made pipes, through the smoke of which their countenances, as the light of the tobacco fires occasionally flashed over them, gleamed and glowered with an expression truly diabolical.

"Sumthin's gwine to happen," sagely observed the Dragoness. "I'se feels it in de bone. Sich rheumatics as I'se had all de day in de lef' shoulder hasn't comed fur nuffin'."

"Sartin ob it," responded the other crone. "I'se had de pain in de right side under de las' rib all de day drough. I'se had de same pain de day 'fore my third husband die, an' I'se says den 'somebody's gwine to be dead, an' sure 'nough it happen jess so."

"Lucky darkey! to hab de three husbands die, an' feel de pain but de one time."

This shot was from the mulatto, whose white teeth and small twinkling eyes, in the uncertain light, imparted a peculiarly malicious expression to her grinning countenance.

"Shut up dar, you yaller nigger! What does you'se know 'bout it? My two fust husbands didn't die; dey war sold."

And at this Aunt Rach laughed as if she had said a particularly good thing, thinking, doubtless, she had silenced her tormentor. She was mistaken. That saucy young person was ready with her retort.

"I tought, p'haps, dey mought hab runned 'way."

Here it was the yellow girl's turn to laugh; but such a low order of wit was evidently regarded by the elder op-

ponent as unworthy of notice, as she attempted no reply.

"But dar'se sumthin' mighty cur'ous gwine on roun' dis plantation," resumed the Dragoness, as soon as the above diversion was ended. "Dar war lightnin' in de Norf las' night, an' not a cloud to be seed; an' sure 'nough dis bery day dat young feller de horse most kill, comed back sound as eber. Mighty cur'ous 'bout his comin' here."

"An' Missey Bella," struck in Aunt Rach; "she jess ought to be 'shamed ob de p'sumpttions with which she carries on with dat Frencher feller, when Mass' Grandaville's not 'bout."

"Not so cur'ous as you'se tinks fur," interjected the yellow girl, "if you'se only knowed what I'se knows ob de doin's ob Missey Bella an' dat Solorgne. 'Spect Mass' Grandaville l'get his eyes open to de 'ceptiousness ob de lady he'se ben makin' so much ob 'fore long. 'Spect he'll find dat a little less ob de white blood would do jess as well, when it comes to de nigger's place."

The support thus brought to the old woman's insinuation was, however, far from being well received. The same slander that is sweet to our own lips, is often nauseating when it falls from others'. So, in this instance, the mulatto's reflection upon her fellow-bondswoman, although but an echo of her companions' words, at once roused all their ire.

"Now you'se jess hush, you 'spicious, jealous critter," began the female Dragon. "'Cause Bella's whiter dan you'se is, dat's no reason you'se should 'buse her when dar'se no groun'. 'Spect Missey Bella knows what she's 'bout; an' Mass' Grandaville, too, when he maked her de lady an' you'se de kitchen gal. 'Haps you'se tinks dat by 'busin' her you'll make folks tink she'se no better lookin' dan you'se is. Nuffin you'se can say is gwine to

make this darkey b'lieve harm ob Missey Bella. If dar
eber war a lady, she'se am de one."

"Dat she am," echoed Aunt Rach. "She'se de good
angel ob dis plantation."

"Didn't she," broke in the Dragoness, "when Frog,
de darlin', war bit with de pisen snake, with her own white
han' gib him sumthin' to drink, an' de bite neber do no
harm nor nuffin? Frog, de rascal, jess say he want to be
bit agin."

"An' when my ole man," quoth the echo, "war took
with the rhueatics, an' war groanin' and moanin', didn't
she send de lin'ment to rub on de limb, an' de whiskey to
take inard; and he say dey do him so much good, 'spe-
cially de whiskey."

"Dat must hab been de fourth husband," wickedly
remarked the mulatto.

"Better hab four husbands dan not be able to hab
none at all," was the sharp retort.

"You'se spiteful, 'licious critter," resumed the Drag-
oness more vehemently than before, directing her epithets
at the mulatto. "Dar you'se is, dis bery minute with
one ob Missey Bella's dresses on, which she gibs you,
an' yet you'se comes roun' 'busin' her an' 'sinuatin' dat
she'se no better dan she ought'r be. Tain't ob no use,
dough. Eberybody on this plantation knows dat Missey
Bella couldn't do nuffin wrong nohow."

The fire of her adversaries was growing too hot for the
girl, causing her to beat a retreat; but before entirely
quitting the field, she sent back one shaft from the door-
way.

"Jess you'se wait, an' 'fore three days am ober, you'll
see whose de fool an' whose de sensible darkey. You'll
see den whose de laff will be."

"What dat gal mean by de three days?" anxiously

asked one of the crones, as soon as Yellow Jule was out of hearing. "'Spect she knows more dan she lits on. I'se allers tought dar war sumthin' wrong 'bout dat Bella. What right hab she got to be puttin' on? She'se nuffin but a slave like de rest ob us niggers."

"An' dat Solorgne," interposed No. Two, "what biz-
ness hab she to be carryin' on with him, when Mass'
Grandaville's 'way an' knows nuffin ob what's gwine on?
Dar's mischief comin'."

"I'se allers knowed," resumed No. Two, "dat gal'd bring ebil on dis place. When she fust comed, didn't one ob my ole men take de feber an' die, an' de worms take de cotton, an' de hurrycane come 'long an' tear up de big trees? She'se de ebil Spir't ob de plantation,
sartin."

"Dem's nuffin, dough," answered No. One, who was the Dragoness, "to what's gwine to happen, if de rheu-
matics an' all de oder signs izzn't ob no 'count. Why,
de Lor' help us! de strangest tings hab been gwine on
'roun here you'se eber hear ob. De oder night, as my
ole man dar war comin' through Missey Bella's flower
garden, what should he see but a white woman kneelin'
by de side ob one ob de arbors, an' swayin' an' rockin'
jess as if de wind war blowin' her 'bout ; an' dough he'se
deaf as dat log, he hear her moanin' an' cryin' jess as
plain as nuffin. Den he knowed she war a Spir't. De
nex' day he war workin' in de garden, an' Missey Bella
war fixin' dat bery arbor, when all at once she goes right
down out ob sight in de groun', an' dat French feller
comes up in de bery same spot."

"De Lor' hab mercy!" groaned the other negress,
and the two ancient hags drew close together in their
fright, while the light from their pipes, roused to unusual
activity by the intensity of their breathing, flickered and

danced with a giddy measure over their black and shrivelled features, making their haggard countenances almost as distinct as in the light of day.

Nor were they, at that moment, without cause for apprehension. Scarcely were the words out of the last speaker's mouth, when a crash overhead was heard, and a black body came crushing down upon them. A hand, armed with no inoffensive projections, swept the face of one, scattering pipe and tobacco in its way, while the other received a heavy thump on the rheumatic shoulder. Both rolled upon the floor, kicking and screaming like lunatics, while a black object, not unlike an imp of darkness, went tumbling out of the door, and there executed a half-dozen summersaults in rapid succession. The stronger outside light showed it to be the youthful gymnast, Frog. In the exercise of his peculiar talent, he had quietly climbed the cabin wall, and, crawling noiselessly along some poles stretched overhead, had taken a favorable position to listen to the conversation below. His weight had proved to be too great for the support, and hence the catastrophe.

Although the phenomenon is thus satisfactorily explained to the reader, the sufferers in the affair always attributed the assault directly to "de debel," who, besides being as tall as the house, and having horns as long as their arms, according to the lucid account they ever afterwards gave of the occurrence, paused long enough in the doorway to pronounce a solemn warning of the tragical events related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FLIGHT AND THE MIDNIGHT DUEL.

HE third day from the meeting in the garden between Solorgne and Isabella, of which an account has been given, found the former promptly at the plantation. There was nothing in an occurrence which was witnessed so often, specially to attract attention ; nor was any unusual interest awakened when Isabella ordered out her favorite saddle-horse, and the two rode away at a leisurely pace, as if for ordinary exercise. Sharp eyes, however, were upon them. The mulatto Jule was watching every movement, and as the riders pursued their way, she quietly disappeared in a strip of forest that skirted the road, and behind the cover of the trees kept them in sight, although herself unobserved. The pursuit in this manner was kept up, until the girl saw the equestrians turn from the main road into one less frequented, that led in the direction of the Mississippi at a point below New Orleans.

Instead of returning to the mansion, Jule quietly hid herself among some bushes at the road-side, in a position to see any one approaching, without herself being seen. Here she remained, keeping all the time a sharp look-out, for more than two hours. Her watch was at last rewarded by the appearance of a horseman approaching at a rapid gait, a sight which gave her manifest satisfaction. The rider was Grandaville. As he neared the point where the mulatto was crouching among the bushes, his horse, the same high-mettled beast he rode the time So-

lorgne bore him company to the plantation, pricked up his ears, and began to show signs of uneasiness. And, as the girl rose up from her place of concealment, he gave such a sudden and violent spring that, but for his excellent horsemanship, the rider must have been unseated. With a curse Grandaville first brought the agitated animal to a stand, and then turned with an angry brow to seek the cause of alarm. His riding-whip was raised menacingly as he discovered a woman, evidently from her dress a slave, silently standing by the road-side. Jule threw back the old bonnet she was wearing, and so secured her master's recognition, just in time to avert the threatened chastisement.

" You yellow devil ! " he exclaimed in some surprise, " what brings you here ? "

Approaching her master, notwithstanding the horse's continued uneasiness on account of her presence, the girl proceeded rapidly to relate what she had seen and heard transpire between Solorgne and Isabella, describing particularly the interview in the garden. Then she stated the events of the morning, the arrival of Solorgne, and the departure of the lovers in company.

" What did Isabella do before she started ? "

" Nuffin' t'all, Massa, 'cept dat she runs into de gar-den whar de flowers is, an' dar I sees her, fur I'se war bound to know all she done, kneelin' inside ob one ob de arbors, an' gwine on as dough she war cryin'. Den she gits up, pulls off one ob de flowers, shoves it in her bosom, an' goes right straight to mount de horse, an' rides 'way with dat Solorgne. She neber offers to gib me nuffin' to 'member her by, nor stops to say one kind word fur all I'se done fur her. I'se jess tinks——"

" Who cares what you think ? Tell me what road they took, quick ! "

"De lef' han' fork road 't'oder side de wood dar dat runs——"

Before she could finish the sentence, Grandaville had put spurs to his horse, and was off at a gallop towards the mansion, leaving the mulatto gazing after him in no very amiable temper.

"De white folks is all alike," she muttered. "Do what you'se may fur dem, dey neber tanks de cullud people. Dat war allers de way with Missey Bella ; but Mass' Grandaville, won't he raise de ole Harry when he catch her? ha! ha! ha! 'Spect he'll tink arter dis, dar's somebody else on de plantation worth 'siderin' 'side de grand white lady with dat nasty black Rose a snickerin' at her heels."

And evidently relieved of a part of her spleen by this reflection, Jule set out as rapidly as she could in the direction of the mansion, to which her master had preceded her, to watch the development of events.

There she found intense excitement. The arrival of Grandaville, his command to Cæsar and two other powerful negroes to mount swift horses and follow him, and the riding away of the four men at a rattling rate, were quite enough to throw the entire population left behind into a state of unprecedented fermentation. Frog was rolling and tumbling about in everybody's way like one possessed, and even the venerable Dragon had left his plants to join in the general confusion. But the chief centres of attraction were the two old women, Aunt Rach and the Dragoness, who were relating to staring circles their experience of "'t'oder night," when "de big black debel jess comed an' told all 'bout what war gwine to happen."

But amid all the excitement there was sagacity enough left to reach the conclusion, that Isabella had "runned

“way with dat Solorgne,” and that “Mass’ Grandaville,” if he caught them, would not leave “a har on dat feller’s head.” At that juncture, it would have been difficult to have told with which party, the pursued or the pursuers, the sympathy of the assembly was.

First let us overtake the fugitives, and follow their fortunes. Though unaware of an actual pursuit, they perfectly comprehended the danger to which they were exposed. Theirs was no ordinary case of elopement, in which heart-disappointment would be the penalty of failure. They were lovers, with lovers’ anxieties, but there was added a fearful realization of personal peril. One was a slave, the absolute property of a master whose power to punish had scarcely any other limit than his will. Before her was freedom—France—a wedded life—the realization of a dream long indulged ; behind her that despotism whose greatest mercy might be death. She knew Grandaville well enough to picture to herself the fury that would take possession of him, when both his anger and jealousy were aroused by the discovery of her flight. The other was not simply despoiling a friend of his mistress ; he was robbing him of his property, and that property a slave—an act severely punishable by law as a crime. He knew not only that the legal penalty was excessive, but that public opinion had so stigmatized the offence as to justify almost any private revenge the injured party might take. He realized, too, the terrible wrath of Grandaville, when he learned all the facts. While he felt conscious of no guilt—having been reared in a non-slaveholding country—but, on the contrary, exulted in the moral aspect of what he was doing, he fully recognized the terrible risk he was incurring.

While each, therefore, endeavored to assume a cheerfulness that was not felt, concealing their fears from each

other as far as possible, it was not to be expected that many words would pass between the travellers. For the greater portion of the time they rode forward in silence, but O! how sensitive were their ears to every sound, and how often did their disturbed imaginations convert the most inoffensive objects into the forms of dread pursuers.

But there were difficulties in their way far more serious than those of the imagination's creating. To the extent that Isabella's occasional rides for pleasure and exercise had familiarized her with the surrounding country, they had no trouble in determining their way; but beyond that limit they found themselves in constant perplexity. The roads were indistinct at best, and swamps and forests frequently intercepted their course. All the vicissitudes Solorgne had experienced in his first journey in that cheerless region, were now renewed under far more trying circumstances. The tortures of the keenest mental anxiety were added to the hardships of the way.

To crown their troubles, the day was nearly spent without a knowledge on their part of how near they had come to their intended destination, concerning which they were afraid to inquire, lest it might lead to their betrayal. Night found them in the depths of a gloomy forest of unknown extent, with scarcely the trace of a path remaining. They endeavored for a time to press blindly forward in the direction which seemed the proper one; but without a single known object to guide them, they ere long realized that even in that they might be mistaken. They drew their reins, and the terrible truth was confessed, that they were—lost. With sad and fearful hearts they took counsel together; but no alternative offered, except to remain where they were until the morning's light would enable them to resume their journey.

After some searching in the darkness, an abandoned cabin was found, the hut of an absent hunter or wood-chopper, windowless and doorless, but it was their only hope of shelter for the night. Their horses were accordingly secured to branches of trees outside, and the weary, heart-sick fugitives entered the miserable hovel.

The first step was to secure a light. This was accomplished by igniting a pile of sticks which had been collected in the cabin's fire-place. As the flames leaped upward, they spread a deceptive cheerfulness throughout the desolate room, and even infused a gleam of comfort into the hearts of the weary travellers, as they looked lover-like into each other's eyes. Little did they think of the betrayal that agreeable, but treacherous, light, as it flashed in long lines through the many openings in the cabin's walls, and shot far into the forest's recesses, might make of their whereabouts, and the danger it was liable at any moment to bring upon them. For a time they quite forgot their depression, their fatigue, their peril. They talked of France, and the home they would have where no slave-holder's claim could interrupt their happiness. Solorgne boasted of his triumph in introducing a bride, whose beauty would make her the leader of fashion, and him the envy of all his companions. But delightful as such anticipations were, the necessities of the terrible present, and the prospect of the equally terrible morrow, could not be wholly ignored. The morning's struggle was before them, and they needed all the strength that rest could give. With their saddles for pillows, and masses of drifted leaves, which the wind had collected about the cabin, for beds, they stretched themselves upon the earthen floor, and for the first time realized in sleep the sweets of absolute forgetfulness.

How long unconsciousness had lasted, Solorgne had

no means of knowing, although it was past the hour of midnight when he was aroused in the midst of a dream which had carried him back to France, and, with Isabella by his side, surrounded him with the smiling countenances of his friends. He was not long, however, in discovering that other parties than those of his vision were present. Rude hands were upon him, and a clearer realization of the situation showed that two athletic Africans had raised him to his feet, and were firmly holding him, while a third was binding his hands behind his back. Nor was he long in discovering that a fourth person was present, whom a glance showed to be Grandaville. Standing where the light from the dying embers in the fireplace, the same which had betrayed the fugitives to their pursuers, was flashing across his countenance, disclosing a grim, malignant smile of exultation, Solorgne's former friend and Isabella's master stood, with folded arms, silently gazing upon his prisoner. Their eyes met, and for a time neither abated the intensity of his look. Solorgne, however weak his general character, was impulsively brave, and, unaffected by any consciousness of guilt, his first emotion was indignation, not fear of the man who was exulting over his helplessness. In such a contest he was the superior of the two. Grandaville was not long in discovering the advantage his adversary possessed, and put an end to it by ordering the negroes to lead their prisoner into the open air.

There was a small cleared space in front of the cabin, and there the two men again met face to face. Cocking a pistol, and presenting it to Solorgne's head, almost within touching distance, with a bitter sneer Grandaville began :

“ And this is the way, Edmund Solorgne, you repay my friendship. You avail yourself of my courtesy to gain

admission to my house, and then steal my property. Scoundrel, thief, your hour has come ! ”

The reply was deliberate and intensely irritating.

“ Friendship ! is that what you call coming upon a man in his sleep, binding his hands, and then presenting a pistol to his head ? You do well to talk of courtesy, Ruy Grandaville. You can take my life, if you choose, because it is in your power ; but your accusation against me is false. You voluntarily brought me into the presence of a woman whose charms were irresistible ; a woman whom you deprived of the liberty which makes life worth having, and held merely for the gratification of an unlicensed passion. I was not adamant, and a spectacle of such loveliness, united to such distress, awakened a sentiment stronger than friendship, stronger than courtesy. It was love, an honest, manly love, which led me to attempt your victim’s rescue from your cruel, brutal power.”

“ She was my slave.”

A provoking smile played over the features of the shackled man, as he saw how he had driven his opponent to the defensive, and he hastened to press his advantage.

“ Your slave ! but your slave had beauty which fitted her for a court ; she had accomplishments which would have made her the idol of society ; she had a heart which qualified her to be an honest, honorable man’s wife. She was one to be loved, truly, generously loved. And yet, because you had the law on your side, you chose to hold her in a low, debasing servitude, making her the plaything of your lusts. I saw her not as your slave, but as a woman—a pure, beautiful, suffering woman ; and I should have been all you call me, and worse, had I made no effort to wrest her from your polluting, cowardly——”

“ Villain ! enough by——” hoarsely interrupted Gran-

daville, now fairly beside himself with rage ; and another moment would have ended Solorgne's earthly career forever, had not, at that instant, a hand been laid upon the out-stretched arm of the impetuous man, and a soft, but emphatic, voice sounded in his ear :

“ Stop ! ”

It is needless to say that the speaker was Isabella, who, at that moment emerging from the cabin, had at a glance taken in the whole scene.

“ You claim to be a man of honor, of courage, Ruy Grandaville,” she went on, when she saw that her interference had been in time, “ and yet you would kill a man unarmed, with his hands bound, without the power to strike a blow. For shame ! Ruy Grandaville, for shame ! ”

“ You are right,” responded Grandaville, whose ebullition of ungovernable fury had by this time partially subsided. “ You are right. It would be the act of a coward. He shall have a chance, thief, scoundrel, as he is. Here, Cæsar, unbind this man’s hands.”

Then, as soon as the prisoner’s arms were free, taking the companion to the pistol he held in his hand from his belt, and cocking it, Grandaville handed it to Solorgne.

“ Here, take that,” he said, “ and let us settle this matter in a way that nobody can say is unfair. Cæsar, measure off ten paces.”

The imperturbable negro coolly stepped the specified distance, as directed.

“ Now, sir, take your place at one end of the measurement ; I shall take the other.”

Solorgne quietly obeyed.

“ And you, Madam,” continued the speaker, turning to Isabella, “ as you have been the cause of the quarrel, and are to be the prize of victory to whichever survives,

you have your part to perform in this affair. You shall take your stand there," pointing to a position a little to one side of a direct line between himself and Solorgne, "and give the word to fire."

Isabella moved to the point indicated.

"Now then," Grandaville went on, addressing her, "when we are ready, you shall repeat the words, 'One—Two—Three,' and at the word 'Three,' either shall be at liberty to fire as soon he chooses. Ho, there, you fellows! get us some light, so that we can see to transact this business with some kind of certainty and order."

The negroes, to whom the last command was addressed, hastened to strip some dry bark from a fallen tree near by, and, having kindled at the fire in the cabin the great torches they made, two of them, with the blazing bundles in their hands, took their stations a few steps from the principal actors. As the flames rolled up into the air, the light fell upon the waiting duellists, bringing out each line and expression of visage as clearly as if it had been in the broad light of day. A look of settled defiance was the challenge each countenance bore.

Everything was ready. Within the circle lit up by the blazing bark, every object was painfully distinct. Beyond, the gloom was doubly intense. Overhead, the branches of the nearest trees, half in the light and half in the shadow, hung silently like the wings of great monsters overlooking the scene, and breathlessly waiting for the tragedy to begin. Far away above, through a rent in the tree tops, a narrow strip of sky, set with brilliant stars, was to be seen ; but the principal parties to that awful tableau looked not above them. They apparently thought not of Heaven. Each watched the other's countenance, as they stood with pistols half advanced in their hands and gleaming in the light, with a sullen scowl which told

only too plainly how resolutely their minds were fixed upon the murderous work before them. The stillness of the hour was terrible. They waited nothing now but the signal for action.

And Isabella, what was her bearing in that terrible ordeal? It might have been the reflection of the light, but every particle of color seemed to have fled from her face. Nevertheless, she gave no sign of faltering. Once she turned her eyes upward, as if asking for strength, but whatever her thoughts, she was given little space for their indulgence.

“Ready,” said Grandaville firmly.

“Ready,” as firmly responded Solorgne.

Isabella’s part in the drama was reached. Somewhat tremulously, but distinctly, she began :

“One.”

“Two.”

“Three.”

The last word was lost in the crash of two pistols, so simultaneously discharged that they seemed to give but a single report.

Grandaville stood firm and easy, his right hand sinking slowly to his side. Solorgne for a moment maintained an erect posture, his arm with the smoking pistol still out-stretched, as if in bewilderment ; then plunged heavily forward upon his face.

A shriek rang out on the still night air, and Isabella was quickly bending over the fallen man. A minute went by without sign of life or motion in the prostrate form, when, at a word from Grandaville, a negro advanced and turned the body so as to bring the face fully into the light of the torches. A convulsive tremor passed over it ; the eyes seemed to rest with a brief glance of recognition upon Isabella, as if a smile were struggling

to break through, and then settled into the fixed stare of death.

Having pressed a long kiss upon the silent lips, Isabella sank into a kneeling posture by the dead man's side, her face hidden in her hands. Here she remained like a statue, except by an occasional low sob, giving no indication by sound or motion of the grief that was in her heart.

"Cæsar," said Grandaville, speaking in a subdued tone, "mount your horse, and follow the road to the right for about a mile, and you will come to a cabin. Rouse the proprietor, and tell him that Ruy Grandaville wants him here. At the same time get from him a couple of shovels and a mattock. Be off, and lose no time."

While the negro was absent on his errand, Isabella never once changed her position, nor was a word spoken. Grandaville, with arms folded across his breast, occasionally walked softly backward and forward upon the grass in front of the cabin, but the greater portion of the time he stood as stationary as the mourner at the dead man's side.

After the lapse of nearly an hour, Cæsar returned on foot, carrying the tools his master had sent for, and riding the negro's horse was a white man, who proved to be Walker, the swamp-squatter.

"Hullo, Granderville! yer here again? Glad ter see yer! Glad ter see yer!" shouted the new-comer, as he rode within speaking distance. Then, as his eye fell upon the dead man, and his mind seemed to take in something of the nature of the case, he added apologetically, "I'm allers glad ter see yer, yer knows."

"Shootin' somebody, has yer?" he went on. "Ho! ho! I see how'tis," he proceeded, as he caught a sight of Isabella. "Ben a-foolin' with one of yer niggers, the

villain! Served him right, Granderville! served him right! Well, well, spilt my eyes, if t'izzn't that stranger feller from the country whar they hasn't got no slaves. Didn't 'ject ter take one when he could, though, ha! ha! Like all the other aberlitioners. Not bad lookin' though; jist the kind of chap to play the devil with the wenches. They takes ter that sort like flies ter a honey-pot. The likes of us don't stand no chance when they're buzzin' 'bout, does we, Granderville? ha! ha! ha!"

"For God's sake, be quiet!" exclaimed Grandaville, putting an end to Walker's pleasantry.

"What, neighbor, yer not troubled with 'punctiousness, is yer, arter the job's done? I'm never hurt in that way when I've killed anybody, an' I've spilled some blood in my time. I jist considers the thing's done, an' thar's an end on it. But I 'spect as now what yer wants is ter have the feller planted. He'll never be of no more 'count 'bove ground, that's sartin. So boys, thar's the tools; jist git ter work, an' we'll soon chuck him under."

The negroes thus addressed took up shovels and mattock, and in a short time a shallow grave was in readiness. The body was lifted up and lowered into it, and the earth being shoveled back to its place, soon hid all that remained of Edmund Solorgne from mortal sight.

Isabella had knelt at the head of the grave, as the work of interment was going on, weeping profoundly, but silently. But, when the last shovelful had been pressed down, she threw herself forward with a piercing cry, and touched her lips to the cold ground, retaining her prostrate position.

No one interfered with her. Even Walker took off his hat and stood silently by. It was for a few minutes only. Rousing herself, she again rested on her knees.

At a sign from Grandaville her horse was brought for-

ward, and, without protest on her part, she was assisted to the saddle. The others quickly mounted, and as the first rays of the rising sun were touching the topmost branches of the forest, a quiet procession, led by Grandaville, who was followed by the bowed form of Isabella, moved on through the fading darkness below, in the direction of the plantation.

CHAPTER XVI.

A LOVER'S PERPLEXITY.

HE intelligent reader will experience little difficulty in comprehending the chief inducement that made Charles Brown a party to the scenes at the old Triangle Building described in a previous chapter. His early training had something to do with it, undeniably. He was an Abolitionist, as the opposers of slavery on principle were opprobriously called, by education. His sympathy with a people whom he sincerely believed to be the subjects of legal outrage and unreasonable prejudice, prepared him to labor cheerfully in their behalf. But, at the same time, common sense taught him that the little benefit he could render a limited number of them by the course he was pursuing, was by no means commensurate with the personal risk he incurred. No one better understood the temper of the people among whom he was sojourning. He knew their inveterate hostility to any one, and especially to a citizen of the North, who might presume to interfere between them and the colored race. He was aware that, in assisting the slave-girl Rhoda to escape the custody of her master, he had violated a statute, the penalty of which was exceptionally severe. He felt that every hour he persevered in his Quixotic undertaking in connection with Miss Castellos, exposed him and her to increasing peril. All this was perfectly clear to his mind—a mind which had always been accustomed to reason closely

upon every line of action it had contemplated ; and yet he did persevere in a course which his cooler judgment told him was little better than madness.

It is not to be supposed that he had ventured upon a policy so full of danger without a struggle, or that he adhered to it without serious misgivings. The process by which he had become involved, was simple enough. When Miss Castellos mentioned to him, and in that confidence which made the communication far more interesting, that she was giving instruction to certain colored children who were without other means of education, in the frame of mind in which several interviews with that young lady had left him, it was a very easy thing for him to offer his co-operation. The proposition was made without much reflection upon the possible consequences its acceptance might involve, beyond the increased opportunity it would afford him for meeting a person whose society he had found strangely attractive. He was not then in a mental condition to practice the same cautiousness he would have ordinarily brought to bear upon so important a matter. Who in the first stages of a love attack ever is ?

His offer was accepted, and then, when he did begin to reason somewhat deliberately concerning the matter, and his judgment told him of the utter impolicy of the step, he felt that he had gone too far at once to recede. Honor was brought into the service of Love, and made to become the scape-goat for its follies. So he resolved to go ahead with the proposed undertaking, in good faith, as he expressed it to his own conscience, trusting that the arrangement would be of but brief continuance. Meanwhile, every possible precaution was adopted to insure the safety of himself and of his coadjutor. The old Triangle Building was selected as the seat of opera-

tions for very obvious reasons. There was no place in New Orleans where a considerable number of colored persons, old or young, could be brought together with less liability to discovery or suspicion. A room in the upper story, suitable for the purpose, was obtained, and there, for several weeks, every second day, at a given hour, did Brown and Miss Castellos meet a certain number of colored youth for the purpose of imparting not only harmless, but useful, instruction.

As for Brown's associate in the, under the circumstances, singular, if not fool-hardy work, she was not so situated as to have a very clear realization of its risks. She was a simple-hearted woman, to whom the task was purely a labor of love. Consulting her own feelings towards the unhappy blacks, she did not seriously consider the prejudices by which others in her own station in life were controlled. Had she even suspected the extent of the peril into which her influence was leading her New England friend, as well as herself, she would not for the world have consented to the part she was destined to play. But Isabella Castellos—for that was the name in full—was ignorant of two very important elements in the case. She did not understand the state of public feeling about her, and she did not know that Charles Brown, in his seemingly philanthropic labors, was actuated less by sympathy for the blacks than by love for her. Being, as will in due time appear, the only acknowledged child of a weak and doting father, flattered and petted by society, and accustomed to have her own way in pretty much all her inclinations, especially such as were of a charitable tendency, she did not stop to reflect upon the consequences which her erratic benevolence might bring upon herself and others. Supposing that Brown had properly weighed the liabilities, and was in a temper to consider

them fairly, she was disposed to trust such matters to his judgment, in which she had been led to place great confidence.

Thus it was that the Contraband School in the old Triangle Building was opened, and for several weeks had pursued its uninterrupted course. The first sensation Charles Brown experienced in his labors was intense satisfaction. He was brought into almost daily communication with the person who had excited the warmest interest he had ever felt in another. There was no love-making, it was true—nothing but occasional stolen glances of admiration, of which he would not for any consideration have had her conscious. It was, for the time, enough for him that they were in the same room, and engaged in the same work.

For the time!—but unhappily that time was not to be of long continuance. Love is in its nature essentially aggressive. It never yet was entirely satisfied with anything short of full and absolute possession. Brown soon found to his sorrow, that distant worship was not enough to satisfy his heart's cravings. He discovered that he had become another Tantalus, dwelling in sight of pleasures beyond his reach, and which he knew not how to approach. Clear-headed as he naturally was, he was not long in ascertaining that he had become involved in two great perils.

To the danger from a surrounding slave-holding community to which he was hourly exposed, was added one of which he was far more keenly susceptible—that to his peace of mind. He began to realize how trying it was to be misunderstood. While willing to be credited with a fair share of philanthropy, he would have greatly preferred that Miss Castellos had accepted a portion of the sacrifice he was making, as a tribute to herself.

Not that, by word or deed, he would have avowed such a thing ; but he was disappointed that she showed no recognition of the fact. What is so irksome as a want of appreciation on the part of those whom we esteem ?

He was chagrined, too, for that, while he could not be insensible that his regard for his co-laborer was growing more and more decided, she seemed to undergo no change of sentiment towards him. Her manner was the same from day to day, always pleasant, always fascinating, but showing no growth, no increase of warmth or interest. Were not his society and his sacrifices deserving of something better ? he began to ask himself. It was time, he thought with a lover's impatience, and possibly with a lover's unreasonableness, that the qualities he believed himself to possess should be making some impression—his zeal be meeting with some return.

It must not be supposed that, during all this time, he was an unresisting victim to the infatuation that had come over him—that he had no desire for emancipation. Again and again did he discuss the whole matter in his own mind, and again and again did he acknowledge the blindness and folly of his course. Not only that, but he resolved time and again to set himself free, as far as possible, by removing himself beyond the range of immediate temptation. The difficulty was not in deciding upon what he ought to do—his mind was clear enough upon that point—but in the policy he adopted to effect his deliverance. To diminish the pain of separation from the loved object, he set about the endeavor to convince himself, by a process of reasoning, that Miss Castellos was, in some way, unworthy of the adoration she had inspired. This led to a review of her character, her merits and demerits, in the hope of finding some assail-

able point, some unlovely trait. There was the secret of defeat.

Such reviews are always fatal to doubting hearts. They invariably result in bringing the superior qualities of the one considered into greater prominence. Such was Brown's experience. He could find defects in Miss Castellos' character, but he at the same time discovered greater beauties. While he condemned her for a lack of feeling and appreciation towards himself, he was led to a fuller acknowledgment of her noble and generous efforts in behalf of the poor, unappreciated negro. Whenever he undertook to pronounce judgment against her, his imagination carried him away to the low and gloomy school-room in the Triangle Building, and showed the gentle and high-born lady condescending to labor for, and with, the unfortunate ones whom others sought only to degrade and oppress. The picture was fatal to all his endeavors. Each such struggle left him worse entangled than before. He could only conclude to delay his final decision until another, and possibly more favorable, occasion. Thus did the strife and bitterness, the danger and the sacrifice, go on.

Another circumstance added to Brown's embarrassment. He had been led to inquire closely into the character of the man whom report assigned as Miss Castellos' prospective husband. The result was most disheartening.

The world spoke well of Grandaville, of his birth and fortune, of his social qualities and his chivalric bearing; but, penetrating a superficial favoritism, Brown became convinced from the actual facts of his life, that the man was false and corrupted, possessing those traits of extravagance and libertinism which a New Englander's education taught him to regard with special repugnance.

He had learned, too, the truth concerning Solorgne and his unhappy fate. From the statements publicly made, that affair had only increased Grandaville's popularity. All the world knew, or cared to know, was that he had killed a man engaged in an attempt to rob him of one of his slaves. The act was loudly applauded. It was a manly vindication, said a slave-holding public sentiment, of the right of property, and a warning to others alike evilly disposed. But to Brown, who had traced all the circumstances by which a friend had lost his life at the hands of a friend when engaged in a generous and honorable act, the transaction wore a very different aspect.

But what was he to do in consequence of this knowledge? He did not even know that there was ground for the rumored engagement between Grandaville and Miss Castellos. She had never alluded to the subject in his presence; and, if the statement were correct, he felt that under the circumstances his lips were sealed. He could not speak to her upon a subject so delicate, without the liability of his motive being misconstrued—without the secret of his heart being laid bare. She might be standing upon the brink of a precipice, and yet, as matters were, he could do nothing to save her.

There was only one thing he could see within his power to do, and that was to wait and watch. The possibility that something might transpire, which would make his presence of service to the woman he loved, seemed a sufficient pretext for that course. He could dream, but scarcely hope for anything beyond and still more consonant with his wishes. In order that he might be near Miss Castellos, in case the emergency he contemplated should arise, he deemed it best, while he remained in New Orleans, that the school in the old Tri-

angle Building should go on, even at the risk it imposed. So, while Maxwell wondered, and his mother in his old New England home was fretting and sorrowing over the absence of the son she loved, he was dwelling beneath the shadow of a great danger and a great unhappiness.

CHAPTER XVII.

END OF SUSPENSE.

MPENETRABLE as seemed the gloom by which Charles was surrounded, there was at least to be some intermission to the darkness. Unexpectedly appeared a rent in the cloud through which he thought he saw the bright sunshine beyond.

After the pupils had been dismissed, at the conclusion of one of the sessions in the old Triangle Building, a casual conversation sprang up between the two teachers, which happened to turn upon the moral question of holding slaves. Prompted by a motive which the reader can more easily penetrate than could his companion at the time, Brown advanced the opinion, that the act of retaining an ignorant, degraded race in involuntary subjection, might be tolerated, provided all masters and mistresses would labor for their improvement as Miss Castellos was doing. Abstractly he did not believe the doctrine, but so candid did he appear in its expression, and so little had he been given to anything resembling flattery, that his companion supposed him to be entirely sincere.

“I cannot altogether agree with you,” she replied. “You and I might suppose we were laboring for the best interest of the slave, but of that who has the right to judge? If left to his own government, he might see fit to pursue a very different course. When both are liable to err, why should his judgement be ignored, and ours alone be consulted? If he had the power, he might en-

slave us under the same argument, and be just as honest according to his light. In that case we would probably think the doctrine a very hard one. The trouble would seem to be, that when we interfere with freedom of action in any one, and thus destroy individual responsibility, there is no fixed limit to the power assumed. Is not the difficulty in the system itself, and the error a fundamental one?"

"I acknowledge myself vanquished," replied Charles laughingly, "partly because I believe you are right, and partly because I am unwilling to be placed in the seeming attitude of a defender of anything I so thoroughly detest as negro slavery, under any circumstances. But what appears marvellous, is to hear such an argument from the lips of one who, if I am not misinformed, is herself the owner of a considerable number of slaves."

"Your information is correct," rejoined Miss Castelllos; "at the same time you are wrong in your inference. While it is true that I am the legal owner of slaves, it is at the same time the fact, that the title came to me by the bequest of a relative, which imposes a condition that at present ties my hands. Fearing the generosity of youth, the testator put it out of my power to change the legal status of my people until I shall attain to an age yet several years in the future. By that time he trusted a more selfish code would regulate my actions. I am, however, firmly resolved, as soon as the power is obtained, to set every one of my people free, meanwhile preparing them for liberty as best I can."

"But," began Charles, as if about to declare something which was in his mind; and then he hesitated, as if doubting whether he ought to proceed. The truth is, that the point he was desirous of reaching, was one that to him was of the very highest interest, although he

sought to approach it in a way that would indicate indifference. Before his embarrassment had become obvious, he determined to proceed in the manner that his mind had first suggested. "But suppose that, before the time you speak of, you should be married. Your husband, who would then be entitled to a voice in the matter, might not share in your very liberal views."

If Miss Castellos discovered anything, either in her companion's suggestion, or in the manner in which it was spoken, that indicated a more than ordinary interest in the subject on the speaker's part, she carefully concealed all evidence of such knowledge. With perfect calmness she replied to his observation :

"I shall not marry, except upon an understanding to be supported in such manner, legally, as will preclude the possibility of failure, that my pleasure in that regard shall prevail."

There was not much in these words for Brown to build a hope upon. Yet, in his despondency, they operated almost like magic. Perhaps others similarly situated have even built extravagant theories upon less support. He pondered over them for hours, and the longer he considered them, the more he discovered favorable to his wishes. It was clear, he argued, that she was not yet positively affianced to any one, because she spoke of a contingency in connection with any marriage engagement she might form as a thing of the future. There was a condition, too, involved, which would be an impediment, more or less serious, to any such engagement with a pro-slavery man like Ruy Grandaville. The only one from whom she could look for agreement in the important matter of disposing of her property, was an abolitionist like himself. Thus did his mind run on, leading from one inference to another inference, from one fancy to

another fancy, until he could almost see the way clear to his own brightest hopes. He began to raise airy castles, in which it is easy to imagine the principal occupants. The idea of returning to his old home, to astonish his mother with a Southern bride, suggested a picture that filled no limited space in his thoughts. The delight which he and his wife—yes, his wife—would experience in giving a goodly number of their fellow-beings their freedom, and listening to their words of thankfulness for so great a boon, furnished the ground-work for another extensive fancy painting. He seriously contemplated—a sober, practical man as he was—the reality of such dreams. Whether he should not, the very next time he met Miss Castellos, declare his feelings, and so put an end to suspense, was a question he earnestly debated. He did not know what to conclude upon. But while that point remained unsettled, he contrived to live in the atmosphere of a beatific vision until his next meeting with his fellow-teacher at the school room, and then—and then he was awakened to the truth of his crowning sorrow.

While the ordinary exercises of the school-room were going forward, he noticed, or thought he did, that his companion appeared unusually depressed, as if a weight were resting upon her mind. An apprehension which he could not account for, as a consequence of that impression, forced its way into his own thoughts. Anxiously he awaited the coming interview. All doubt was speedily solved. No sooner had the children left the room, than Miss Castellos signified her desire for some conversation. She began, as if anxious to hurry over what was inevitable, by expressing her sorrow at being compelled to withdraw from their pleasant labor. The necessity for that step was her approaching marriage. The gentleman

who was about to become her husband did not, she regretted to say, sympathise in her views concerning the elevation of the colored race. Hence it would be unwise for her to continue personally in the work. She hoped it would not lose anything by her withdrawal. Her sympathy and her assistance, as far as it would be in her power to give the latter, would still be continued. She had not contemplated anything so sudden ; but the engagement she was about to fulfill was of long standing, existing, in fact, from the time of her childhood. Others were urging speedy action. The gentleman she was about to marry, although a strong pro-slavery man, had generously consented that she should direct the liberation of her slaves as she saw fit, and had voluntarily prepared and executed a legal instrument placing that matter under her own control. She would, at the next meeting, announce her purpose to their scholars, but she thought it right that she should first make it known to her co-worker.

Brown was confounded. He could make no reply, and the interview, which was manifestly painful to both, was speedily brought to an end.

“ Fool ! fool ! fool ! ” he exclaimed, as soon as he was by himself. Then a feeling of indignation came over him. It seemed to him as if he had, in some way, been made the dupe of a heartless designer. It never entered his thoughts that Miss Castellos might herself be the victim of cruel deception ; that her ratification of a marriage agreement might have been secured by a craftily studied fraud.

The feeling spoken of was of service in enabling him to take a more rational view of the situation. He saw the worse than folly of his longer continuance in the South. The dream that had detained him was dispelled. It had been a delusion and a snare. Happily—so he

said to himself—Miss Castellos knew nothing of his infatuation. She should remain in ignorance of the wound she had inflicted. He would meet her once more in the school-room—meet her with a calm and stoical brow ; announce his withdrawal from the scene of their labors at the same time she did ; and thus, with banners flying, retire in order from the field of his bitter defeat.

In pursuance of this brave resolution, he at once set about making his arrangements for a speedy departure from the city. His passage to the North was secured ; his baggage was sent on board of the vessel ; Maxwell was notified of his final purpose ; and, with a firm, but sad, heart he took his way for the last time, as he was fully convinced, to the old Triangle Building.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GATHERING OF THE STORM.

HE day on which Charles Brown sadly took his way, for the last time, to the school-room in the Triangle Building, in pursuance of the resolution he had formed, as stated in the last chapter, was destined to be made memorable in the history of New Orleans, in consequence of the following announcement which occupied a prominent place in the city journals of that morning :

“ PUBLIC MEETING.

“ PROPERTY AND LIFE IN DANGER !

“ All citizens solicitous for the public peace, and interested in the security of private property, are earnestly invited to meet this day, at 12 o'clock, at Palmetto Square. The purpose of the call will then and there be more fully explained. It is enough, for the present, to state that evil-disposed persons are in our midst, and that their machinations threaten the integrity of our principal institution, and with it, life and property. Come one ! Come all ! ” .

No name was appended to the call, but that circumstance, as it increased the mystery of the movement, secured for it a more general discussion. To add to the excitement produced by the notice, nearly all the journals publishing it contained editorial articles of a violent and inflammatory character.

One, in discussing the leading topic of the day, spoke

of slavery as "the corner-stone of the State, the chief ornament of the Church, and the main pillar of the social fabric of the South."

"No one must be suffered," declared another, "where we have the power to prevent it, to assail an institution which is the soul of our entire industrial system. Especially must it not be in New Orleans, the commercial emporium and metropolis of the South. Its people owe it to themselves to see that the reputation of their city for fidelity to Southern interests receives no stain."

Another, more specific in its charges, announced that, "It has, of late, been noticed that servants have been growing alarmingly insubordinate, and that escapes from their masters have been of almost daily occurrence. It is reported that Northern Abolitionists are at the bottom of the trouble. It is time these reports were thoroughly sifted, and the indications of danger so prevalent among us traced to their source."

Still more pointed was another, in asserting that, "There is reason to believe that Northern Abolitionists are seeking a foothold in our midst. New England, that hot-bed of modern fanaticism, has been sending forth its emissaries of mischief to threaten our institutions and excite bloody insurrection among our servile population. So clear is the proof, that a doubt can no longer be entertained. This intelligence can excite but one feeling among our people, and elicit but one response. We must meet the emergency with the promptitude its gravity demands. Let us make haste to learn to what extent our enemies have prosecuted their evil designs, while we have been slumbering in fancied security. Let us deal with the conspirators, when they are discovered, as we would with midnight robbers, housebreakers and assassins—the

more summarily the better. Forbearance towards them would be a crime against our own children."

Such appeals, in the then excited state of the public mind, owing to the acrimonious discussions that were going forward upon the Slavery question, both in the Northern and Southern States, could have but one effect. At the time and place named for the meeting, a large and earnest concourse of people had assembled. No one appeared to know from whom the call which had brought them together had come, nor the grounds upon which it was issued ; but all concurred in the opinion that it had relation to movements on foot among the enemies of slavery, and that there was real danger to the community. Stories of threatened negro insurrection and of outside interference with slaves, starting from mere expressions of opinion in the first instance ; from circumstances of little or no consequence in themselves ; or from no traceable source whatever, rapidly spread throughout the assembly and found plenty of believers. Great excitement was the result. Loud denunciations of all abolitionists, and especially of such parties as were suspected of instigating negro conspiracies, were heard on every side. All classes were represented. The wealthy slaveholder and the poorest day-laborer were alike intent upon ferreting out the common enemy, as the adversary of slavery was held to be, and bringing him to speedy punishment.

Precisely at the hour of twelve, some one made himself heard with a proposition that the mayor of the city should preside over the meeting. A general expression of approval followed. That functionary, being present, thanked the multitude for the compliment it had paid him ; declared his ignorance of the immediate object that had brought so many of the people together, but ex-

pressed the belief that there must be some sufficient cause for the agitation that prevailed ; and closed by avowing his desire to serve the public to the utmost of his ability.

No sooner had the mayor taken his seat, than a call was made by some one upon a local politician of prominence and popularity, who was seen to be present. The name once mentioned, was taken up by the assembly, and clamorously repeated. The individual thus honored, never averse to acquiring notoriety and giving expression to his views, came forward with well-feigned reluctance. He confessed that he did not understand the particular facts which they had been called together to consider, but expressed himself as fully sharing the common feeling, that there was an evil which called for prompt and decisive action ; and thence he proceeded in a manner which, from long practice, he thoroughly understood, to play upon the passions and apprehensions of his audience, and arouse them to the highest state of excitement. At the same time that he was ministering to their fears, he flattered their vanity, by entering upon an eloquent vindication of the institution of Slavery. He argued that it had been of incalculable advantage to the negro, in bringing him from barbarism to civilization, and extolled its benefits to the dominant race. Its practical working, wherever it had prevailed, he said, had been to make men brave and women virtuous. It had developed a higher social grade than was anywhere else to be found. A contempt for small things, a tenacious regard for personal honor, and a chivalrous respect for the weaker sex, were its legitimate results. The Southern gentleman, under its elevating and refining influence, was without a peer, and his wife and daughter, relieved of the drudgery of domestic toil, became his fitting companions, and the brightest ornaments of society at home or abroad.

By way of contrast, the speaker drew a satirical picture of the New Englander in his Northern home. The Yankee, he said, was never so happy as when looking after other people's business. He kept his wife and daughters in the kitchen, and preached against a system which would promote them to the parlor. He was religiously opposed to enslaving negroes, and so made servants of his own flesh and blood. His ideas were narrow and bigoted, and yet he was forever thrusting them in other people's faces. He was jealous of Southern superiority, and so wanted to rob the South of the principal element of its financial and social wealth, which he was endeavoring to do upon the hypocritical pretence of an enlarged philanthropy.

"Such are the men," continued the orator, "who conceive it to be a Christian duty to send missionaries among us, to teach the white master to elevate his slave to an equality with himself, while they are educating the negro in a code of hatred and insubordination that will prepare him to cut his master's throat."

Other speakers followed in a similar strain ; but while the multitude was freely entertained, and roused to an equal pitch of indignation and enthusiasm, no practical result seemed likely to follow. While matters were in this condition, an eloquent speaker having just concluded his remarks, the mayor, as presiding officer of the meeting, arose and stated to the audience, that he was about to introduce to them a representative of a name honorable in the city's annals, and a gentleman who, by reason of his own worth and social position, was entitled to be heard with more than ordinary deference. The person referred to, upon coming forward, was greeted with a hearty burst of applause. He was Ruy Grandaville.

Unlike his predecessors, Grandaville attempted no

oratorical display. His words were few, but delivered with unusual emphasis.

"Fellow citizens," said he, "I have come here, not to speak, but to act. Either let us go home, or do the work that has called us together. If there are enemies to our institutions among us, let us find them ; and having found them, let us adopt the shortest method of disposing of them. Abolitionists and ourselves cannot remain in the same community. Either they must be destroyed, or we shall be. The first question, therefore, is : Are there Abolitionists among us ? and the next, if the answer be, Yes : Who and where are they ? I do not propose to take up your time, but call upon any one present possessed of information upon those points, to come forward and state it."

The speaker here folded his arms and remained silent, while the audience, already beginning to weary of much speaking, greeted his proposition with hearty applause. Then there was silence to see if any one would respond to Grandaville's call.

Intense was the excitement when, some distance back in the midst of the assembly, a person was discovered pressing forward as if in answer to the demand for information just made. Unable to make his way through the dense throng with a rapidity equal to the anxiety of those about him, he was suddenly lifted up, and borne forward above the heads of the intervening mass, to the speaker's stand. There, as he turned his face confidently to the audience, he was seen to be a young man, whose stylish dress and abundant jewelry, quite as much as his manner, showed him to belong to the class of fast men of which every Southern city, at that day, possessed so many representatives. Of the facts he had to state, the reader is already partially advised ; for he was the master of

Rhoda, the slave-girl, whose history, as it came from her own lips, had so deeply impressed both Charles Brown and Miss Castellos.

The tale he told was quite a different story. He was the owner of a slave, a female, whom he had always treated with the greatest indulgence, and who, for a long time, had given no evidence of discontent. All at once, however, the manner of his servant changed. She became sullen, restless and disobedient. He had endeavored, by increased kindness, to reconcile her to her condition. It was in vain ; for suddenly she disappeared, and with all his efforts, he had been unable to find her. He had instituted an investigation, however, and the result was the discovery of a state of things which fully explained the mystery. He had ascertained that there was a place in the city where blacks and whites were accustomed regularly to meet. The object, of course, was to concoct treason against their institutions, if not conspiracy against their lives. He had learned that a New Englander, recently arrived in the city, was the leader in these gatherings. To the place where the meetings were held he had traced his slave, but beyond that point he could get no information. "I have positive assurance," continued the speaker, "that the conspirators to whom I owe the loss of my property, are, at this very hour, assembled at the place to which I have alluded."

At this point the audience, which had been wrought up to an intense degree of feeling as the speaker proceeded, burst forth into a clamorous demand for the name of the locality to which he referred, intermingled with oaths and dire threats of violence towards the hated Abolitionists.

As soon as order was sufficiently restored for his voice to be heard, the speaker bent forward and announced a name which operated like magic on the assembly. First

there was a struggle ; then a breaking up of the whole mass ; and then a rush like the flow of water which had just overcome an obstruction. The presiding officer was left alone in his chair, and the multitude which, a moment before had crowded about him, was sweeping madly down the street, a resistless and rapidly-swelling torrent, in the direction of the old Triangle Building.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MOB.

O absorbed was Charles Brown with his own bitter reflections, and so busy with the preparations he was making for his expected journey Northward, that he paid no attention to what was going on about him. On the day he was resolved to make his last appearance in the old Triangle Building, he did not so much as look at a newspaper. Had he done so, a very different result might have followed. But as it was, at the usual hour of meeting Miss Castellos and their pupils, he set out for the school-room totally unconscious of any disturbance in the community around him, and without a thought of the storm that was soon to burst upon his head.

As he entered the room, he bowed coldly to Miss Castellos, who had arrived before him, and took his accustomed seat with as much apparent unconcern as if there was nothing unusual in the occasion. He had nerved himself to this seeming indifference with the deliberately-formed resolution that his co-laborer should know nothing of the suffering of which she was the cause. Not merely did his pride appeal to him to pursue this course, but his judgment told him it was the best. He could not hope to change the purpose she had formed, and a revelation of his hidden grief could only inflict pain upon her. No, he would not murmur at his fate. She should adopt her course, and he would take his, bearing his affliction with an outward calmness that would give no token of the struggle going on within.

Nevertheless, he could not restrain himself from casting an occasional glance in the direction of his fellow-instructor, as she proceeded with her duties, severe as was the pang it gave him, and trying as it was to the resolution he had formed. More than once he thought he detected her in the act of brushing away a tear, and her cheek certainly wore a hue of unusual pallor. The struggle was not all on one side. As for Brown himself, he went on with his labors mechanically, only anxious for the trial to be over.

At last, greatly to his relief, the hour for dismissing the scholars arrived. Then, however, was to begin a scene quite new to that quiet room. Miss Castellos, with as much firmness as she could command, attempted to explain to the children present the purpose she had already announced to Brown.

It was not at once possible for the hearers to realize the fact that they were to be separated from their beloved teacher. When, however, the sad truth did penetrate their minds, there was at first a painful silence, as if their surprise was too profound for utterance ; then a wail was heard, low at first, but quickly swelling into a general burst of grief ; and then, all restraint giving way, they left their seats and crowded round Miss Castellos, kneeling, kissing her hands, and testifying, according to the impulse of the moment, the emotions by which their bosoms were filled. Not the least affected of those present was Brown. With his own sharp sorrow gnawing at his heart, it was impossible for him to remain an unmoved spectator of such a scene. It was with difficulty that he refrained from casting himself down among the weeping children before Miss Castellos, and joining his prayer with theirs, that she should reconsider her resolution, and that they might continue the pleas-

ant, although perilous, labor in which they had been engaged.

Into what indiscretion he might have been led it is impossible to tell, had not his attention at that moment been diverted by other sounds that rose even above the sobbing and entreaties of the wailing scholars. It seemed as if a multitude of feet were gradually coming nearer and nearer, while the voices of angry men were mingling hoarsely in the strange uproar. Sensitive to the suggestion of danger, from a consciousness of the hazard they had been provoking, Brown hastened to the nearest window, and there a spectacle met his eyes that almost froze the blood in his veins.

Down a street leading directly to the old Triangle Building was pouring a dense body of men, fiercely shouting and gesticulating as they came. Brown could not distinguish what they said, but he needed no such knowledge to give him warning of their purpose. He realized the danger at once; but was it not already too late to escape it? Almost before he had sufficiently recovered from the shock to give a thought to the situation, the leaders of the mob had reached the street in front of the Triangle, and there paused as their eyes ran over the building, in doubt what next to do. The delay was but momentary. The multitude behind pressed on, and the accumulating mass swept round the building, completely investing it. Other sounds began to be heard. Cries of women and children arose, and pretty soon the heavy tramp of many feet upon the stairways and floors of the old house became audible.

Brown comprehended that, whatever was to be done, no time was to be lost. Turning to Miss Castellos and her companions, whose safety was his first thought, and who, having caught the unusual sounds that filled the air,

had sunk into breathless silence, tremblingly awaiting the solution of the mystery, he exclaimed—

“ Fly, fly ! we are discovered—mobbed ! ”

The youngest in that little assembly knew perfectly the meaning of those words, so familiar were the negroes' minds with the idea of violence. But where were they to fly ? Already footsteps were heard approaching their retreat. All escape seemed to be cut off. A few moments more and the mob would be upon them. Resolutely, Miss Castellos arose, and approached the door by which the sound of footsteps showed their enemies were about to enter, thus placing herself between the children and the threatened danger. The next moment the door flew open, and strange men stood confronting her. The foremost, a young man, flushed and excited, but with something of the look and bearing of the gentleman, stopped short as his eyes met hers.

“ I—I beg pardon. We were looking for Abolitionists ! ” and with that the speaker instinctively and unconsciously lifted his hat.

This unexpected interruption checked the crowd behind, but the delay was for a moment only. A burly, hard-visaged ruffian, perceiving the cause of detention, pushed past his leader, and with a boast that he was not afraid of a petticoat, laid his hand rudely upon Miss Castellos' shoulder to shove her aside. Scarcely had his hand come in contact with her person, before a lusty blow sent him reeling backward among his companions. Brown's strength and activity made him no indifferent boxer, as the effect of this demonstration showed.

The fall of their new leader again staggered the intruders. Brown, now thoroughly aroused, was prompt to avail himself of the delay. Calling upon Miss Castellos and the children to fly by the other passage to the room,

which so far appeared not to have been discovered by the mob, he wrenched a leg from a stool that happened to be near, making a bludgeon by no means inoffensive in the hand of a resolute man, and thus, formidably armed, took his position in front of the door to dispute its passage. The doorway was narrow, only wide enough for two persons to enter at a time, and they not without impeding each other ; so that the odds he would have to meet was not so great after all.

With his club upraised, Charles and his nearest adversaries stood face to face, exchanging looks of mutual hatred. It was evident that the latter shrank from the attack ; but it was not possible that one man should long hold a multitude at bay.

“Down with the Abolitionist!” came from those standing further back, and who, pressing forward, forced those in advance to begin the assault. There was a rush, and the two men composing the first rank went down like beeves. The next two shared the same fate. Their immediate successors, seeing the fall of their leaders, panic stricken, pressed back with such energy that the crowd behind was forced for a moment to recede, and the New Englander, for the time. remained master of the situation.

“A pistol !” shouted one.

“Shoot him !” “Shoot him !” screamed half a hundred voices at once.

These exclamations convinced Brown that the attack was about to be renewed, and in a form to which he could make no successful resistance. Whatever was to be done, therefore, had to be on the instant. Casting a glance about him, he saw that Miss Castellos and the children had, by this time, passed out of the room by the other passage, and to remain where he was, would be simply to defend an empty apartment. His resolution,

accordingly, was quickly formed and acted upon. Sweeping his club in the faces of his adversaries, he sprang backward, and, rapidly crossing the room, passed through the opposite door which he closed behind him. In rushed the mob, and, as he had calculated, led by curiosity to inspect the Abolitionist's den, they scattered through the room, overturning desks and benches, and destroying books, papers and everything they could lay hands on. In this way, valuable time was gained by Brown.

The attention of his pursuers, however, was in this manner not to be long diverted. Nevertheless, something had been secured. Seeing that Miss Castellos and her companions in flight had effected their escape, either from the building, or into rooms leading from the halls below, and, by mingling with the general throng, had a chance of avoiding detection, nothing now remained for him but to think of his own safety. He knew that if once in the crowd outside of the building, his identification would be almost an impossibility, and he could easily baffle his enemies. To accomplish that, it was necessary for him to descend three flights of stairs, and to pass to the street door of the lower story, without detection from below. It was his only hope. Pausing only long enough to satisfy himself that the mob had not yet found that passage from the street, he dashed down the stairs, and had reached the head of the last flight before the pursuit was resumed above. A few seconds more, and he would be out of the building and in safety ; when, with a crash, open flew the street door, and in rushed a portion of the mob, filling the hall below. He was now between two bodies of his enemies, one cutting off his retreat, and the other closing rapidly in behind him. He knew not what to do ; but as he looked despairingly about him, his eyes fell upon what appeared to be a narrow

passage leading at right angles from the hall in which he was standing, being upon the second floor of the building. He sprang to it, without knowing where it would take him ; when, to his dismay, he discovered that only a few feet from the entrance it was cut off by a door, and that door was securely locked or bolted. All his strength was not sufficient to force it open. He was in a trap ; but a glance about him told him that even that trap might be of service in his defence. Standing where he was, in that narrow passage, he could only be assailed in front. He was resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible, and here he could meet his adversaries upon something like equal terms, because only a limited number could reach him at once.

He had barely time to note these points, and place his back to the door that stopped his progress, when his enemies were upon him. The first comers paid dearly for their temerity ; but it was not possible that such an unequal contest could be of long duration. Twice had Brown been beaten down, and his club had been wrenched from him. For the third time, covered with blood and nearly exhausted in strength, he had struggled to his feet, and renewed the conflict with his naked hands ; when, standing upon the stairway, so as to be above both himself and those immediately pressing upon him, he saw some one deliberately aiming a pistol at his breast. The sight afforded him a sense of relief, promising, as it did, escape from a lingering and painful death. He, therefore, glanced gratefully in the direction of his new enemy, and gave a sudden start. He had seen the countenance before. His intended assassin was Ruy Grandaville !

The crash of the pistol rang out sharp and clear above all the noise of the place ; a sudden darkness passed

over Brown's vision, and unconsciousness came to his relief at the very moment that the door against which he was being pressed, unable to sustain the increasing weight, gave way, and the bloody, senseless body fell backward and disappeared. It was swallowed up in what seemed to be a deep, dark pit.

To understand this singular and unexpected disappearance, it is only necessary to know that the door spoken of opened into that portion of the building farthest from the sharp point of the triangle, and consequently that portion which was the longest between the streets. As there was a space left between the rooms that fronted upon the streets, to which no light could obtain access, it had never been finished ; not even so much as a floor laid to correspond with the hall in which the conflict had taken place. Consequently, when the door gave way, there was nothing to break the body's fall, until it reached the floor or the ground below. As the space beneath, which was used for a cellar or storage-room for one of the adjoining shops, was entirely closed at the time, no light could reach it, except by the door which had just been broken open. That was so limited a supply that, to a person standing in the doorway through which Brown had fallen, no object beneath was distinguishable. It was like looking into bottomless depths.

The first of the rioters that pressed forward to discover the whereabouts of the body, recoiled at the darkness and stench that met them.

"He's on his way to Hell, and I propose that we let him take his own road," exclaimed one of the foremost, as he shoved back from that noisesome hole. A hoarse laugh greeted this exhibition of wit. Nevertheless, there were others less inclined to let their victim go, who would have insisted upon securing the body, had not their at-

tention been suddenly called in another direction. Just then a great clamor arose not far off, made up of shouts, cheers and groans. That portion of the crowd which had been surrounding Brown, eager for any new excitement, rushed from the spot in quest of the fresh sensation. So entertaining did it prove to be, that they speedily forgot the old one.

The attraction which so suddenly called away Brown's late assailants, turned out to be a colored man, who was being suspended by the neck from an awning-beam in the street. That he was black was evidence sufficient to the majority of the spectators that his punishment was deserved. But, in addition, he had been guilty of an act which could, by no possibility, at such a time be forgiven. He had struck a white man.

Attracted by the cries of his wife, from whom he had become separated in the attack upon the Triangle Building, of which he was a tenant, he had found her struggling in the grasp of one of the rioters. Without stopping to consider the difference which color had established between them, the enraged husband seized the first weapon he could lay hand upon, and stretched his wife's assailant to all appearances lifeless at his feet. The deed was witnessed by some of the stricken man's companions, and the audacious perpetrator was instantly seized, and borne, amid insults and execrations, to summary execution.

The multitude was just then in excellent humor to enjoy the exhibition. The announcement of the fall of Brown, the Yankee and leader of the Abolitionists, had excited the wildest enthusiasm. Consequently, the appearance of the struggling negro, and his suspension in air, writhing and gasping in the agonies of death, were greeted with the liveliest manifestations of approval. While there is nothing so terrible as a mob, at the same

time there is nothing so whimsical. Its blind fury may be turned by the most trivial circumstance into boisterous merriment. It will roar and laugh in the same breath. Headless and heartless, it is always a creature of strange inconstancy. At this moment the contortions of the dying wretch were the stimulant that fed the risibilities of the crowd. They moved it to laughter and wit.

"He's a-choakin'," cried one. "Don't ye see he's black in the face? Cut him down!"

"Let him hang," yelled another in response. "It's the way to elevate the darkey race."

"A good day for Abolitionists an' niggers," shouted a third. "Let's have a few more on 'em to string up."

The last proposition accorded so well with the merry mood in which the riotous throng had been raised by the entertainment they were enjoying, that it was not only received with cheers and yells of indorsement, but a half-dozen trembling negroes were immediately dragged from their hiding-places about the old building, and preparations were made for their similar elevation, while a general hunt for colored victims was on the point of being inaugurated. To what extent the murderous work might have gone on, now that the taste for blood was aroused, it is impossible to say, had not the mayor of the city, who had leisurely followed the audience over which he had so lately presided, arrived upon the ground, where he was joined in his efforts to restore the peace by certain leading citizens and slave-holders, who had become apprehensive of the loss of their property. Supported by the appearance of a formidable body of police, they were at length successful. The mob reluctantly surrendered its prey, not, however, until more than one victim was past recovery. The destruction already wrought was fearful. The Triangle Building was a wreck. Every

room had been entered, and its walls were marked with blood. The contents of its shops had been destroyed or carried away, the pawnbroker's being the first to meet with spoliation. Its inhabitants had fled for their lives, and rarely without insult or injury.

Nor were they the only sufferers. Many colored people lived in the vicinity, and both their persons and property had been regarded as legitimate spoil. Proofs of violence were to be seen on every hand. A reign of terror prevailed.

The journals of the city the next day were filled with accounts of the riot. Brown, "the Abolitionist," was spoken of as a man of great strength and desperate courage, who had severely wounded several parties before he was finally dispatched. To Ruy Grandaville was accorded much praise for his part in the affair. He was described as not only, by his coolness and decision, giving the principal direction to the movement, but as the one who had put an end to the Northern desperado. "The South and her institutions," said one organ, "has no truer friend, no more gallant champion, than Ruy Grandaville."

Regrets were mildly indulged by some at the occurrence of mob-violence, accompanied by bitter denunciations of the "fanaticism" displayed by Northern opponents of slavery, which was charged as directly responsible for the scenes that had been witnessed. Altogether, the tone of the press, in commenting upon the events with which the reader has been made familiar, was one of exultation, the conclusion expressed being, that they would teach the enemies of the South that she was in no temper to be interfered with in her institutions.

One journal, in concluding its account of the day's excitements, furnished the following item of news :

"Surprise was expressed by certain parties, at a late hour in the day, that nothing had been seen of the Yankee, Brown, after he had been reported killed in the old Triangle Building. That circumstance at one time gave rise to the startling rumor that he had finally made his escape. Nothing could be more absurd. Apart from the testimony of a number of persons who saw him cut and mangled until almost past recognition, and finally shot dead, we are now prepared to give the facts concerning the disposition that was made of his body.

"It seems that, after the darkness of the night had rendered their movements in a measure secure, some of the negroes returned to the scene of yesterday's riot, and removed the dead Abolitionist without being observed. Preparations were immediately made for his interment. Fearing further interference, owing to the excited condition of public feeling, they made their arrangements to bury him before morning. Accordingly, after the hour of midnight, he was conveyed to one of the colored people's graveyards outside of the city limits, and there interred. A large concourse of negroes assembled at the cemetery, and their manifestations of grief are said to have been such as to furnish unmistakable proofs of gratitude and affection. The scene at the grave is described as truly affecting.

"Attracted by the movement, several members of the police were present, and saw the coffin containing the body deposited in the grave. There can, therefore, be no doubt of the facts stated, which were furnished us by eye-witnesses as we were about going to press. There was no interference on the part of the authorities. Perhaps it was better so. There is certainly an appropriateness in one who chose to make negroes his associates in life, resting among them after death."

But others than journalists of New Orleans, and of the South, published accounts of the affair, and indulged in comments to suit their own views and feelings. The public mind everywhere throughout the country was becoming intensely inflamed ; for those influences which soon afterwards culminated in civil war, were then actively at work. The events which have been described, added another element to the bitterness of the strife. Northern journals took up the matter, and made it the text for their most fiery articles. Brown, according to their accounts, was a martyr to a great principle. His heroism, his disinterestedness, his untimely end, were all glowingly portrayed. Poems were written upon his death, and orators upon the stump and in the pulpit made it the theme for many discourses. Not the least eloquent of these was the Rev. Mr. Sunnyman, who improved the opportunity by making a pointed and powerful attack upon negro slavery, which he showed to be condemned by many passages of Scripture.

While to politicians and professional manufacturers of sensations the event was only so much capital that was to be made the most of, to one heart it brought a sorrow that was intensely real. Charles Brown's mother, in her New England home, for a time was like one that was stricken with death in life. She lived on, but the end of existence was gone. Then there came a change. Her eye grew strangely bright, and a singular infatuation took possession of her. She thought her boy was coming home, and she could think of nothing, talk of nothing, but his return. She busied herself in the preparation of numberless little luxuries to be ready for his arrival. Poor woman ! They said in low, sad tones, that she "was out of her head."

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT GOOD BLOOD.



FERDINAND CASTELLOS was one of the most attractive young men connected with the Spanish Court, at a time when it was the most brilliant in Europe. His descent was quite enough to make the fortune of an ordinary courtier; for, although marred by a taint of illegitimacy, it was traceable directly to the loins of the great Ferdinand of Aragon. But he had many things besides birth in his favor. Not the least of these was a remarkably handsome person. Nor was he lacking in mental gifts, particularly that one which imparts efficiency to all others—ambition. What he chiefly labored for, was military advancement. His chosen reliance was the sword. With that he trusted to clear his way to the one desirable thing that had been denied him—fortune.

Nor was there a doubt of his success, had he been suffered to follow the bent of his own genius without interruption. But that was not to be. Love's sorcery, as it has done a thousand times before, and as it will continue to do as long as human nature endures, intercepted him on the shining road to wealth and station, and led him aside to dally with its enchantments. He was fascinated, and entrusted the happiness of his life to the keeping of

one whom he fondly believed to be fidelity itself. Had he sought rank and fortune with a wife, he might have commanded both with the hand of the proudest about the Court ; but, governed by a loftier sentiment, he gave his heart to one whose beauty was her wealth. Otherwise, she was as poor as the man whose faith she accepted. Unfortunately, she failed to share the disinterestedness of her lover ; and when a man of inferior qualities of heart and mind, but of high station and abundant possessions, offered his rank and name, she deliberately transferred her allegiance to him.

When Ferdinand returned from a distant expedition in the king's service, covered with new laurels, and hastened under the combined promptings of love and expectation to claim the prize he believed to be in waiting, he was amazed, confounded, infuriated to find his solemnly betrothed the wife of another. Naturally headstrong, and stung to madness by the wrong of which he had been a victim, he looked to nothing but his sword for redress. His successful rival was forced to meet him in a combat that had to prove fatal to one or the other, and soon lay a lifeless form beneath his challenger's pitiless eye.

Had his position been less secure in the royal favor, Ferdinand's punishment must have been most severe ; for the fallen man was one of the king's highest subjects ; but, in consideration of the eminent service he had rendered, he was merely sentenced to banishment to the New World, a destination which then was, of all things, the most acceptable that could have been ordered. Henceforward, he was a soldier pure and simple. Always foremost in undertakings involving danger, he seemed to have lost all care for praise and distinction. His life was as austere as it was disinterested. He cheerfully shared every discomfort, as well as every peril, with his

meanest soldier. His only object in life seemed to be the performance of his duty in his sovereign's service.

Hence, when the territory of Louisiana passed under the dominion of Spain, and it was known that its possession could be retained only by a long and arduous conflict, Ferdinand was selected as one of the captains to accompany the new commandant to that almost unknown country. In this capacity he became a resident of New Orleans, and was soon looked upon as its most trusty defender in those wars with the Indians which so often threatened it with destruction. In time, there was not an inhabitant of the infant city but honored and loved the name of Ferdinand Castellos. The affection was a mutual one. In fact, so strongly did the kind-hearted soldier, now grown to be a grizzled and time-hardened veteran of middle years, become attached to his new home that, when the supremacy of the country passed from the hands of the Spanish king, he chose to remain and share its destinies. From that time on he was one of the leading and most valued citizens of the place.

Among those whose fast friendship he secured, was Amade Dectoval, a French nobleman of broken fortunes, who, carried away by the excitement attending the speculations of the notorious Law, had invested all he possessed in the famous Mississippi Scheme of that desperate adventurer, and come to Louisiana as a manager of the company. When the bubble burst, he found himself reduced almost to the condition of a beggar in a new and unsettled community. He had no inducement left to return to his native country ; and, with blighted hopes, continued an unequal struggle with poverty and misfortune in the home of his adoption. Being a man of superior culture, Castellos, who, beneath the soldier's rough exterior, retained all the elegance of his earlier life, had

been drawn to him, partly by compassion, and partly by reason of their kindred tastes, and supplied him the only solace he possessed in congenial companionship. They became established friends. But, notwithstanding the comfort such an association afforded the mind of the fallen nobleman, it could not restore health and strength to a constitution undermined by a long train of disasters, and, when he found himself suddenly attacked by one of the diseases incident to the climate, he knew that his end was near.

He was in very great mental distress. For himself he was indifferent, but he had a daughter, except himself, the sole surviving member of his household, who would be left destitute and alone among strangers. To add to the difficulties of the case, Eugenie was only seventeen years of age, and very beautiful. She was too young and inexperienced to be safely left to her own guardianship in that remote and half barbarous place. What to do, the unhappy father did not know; but, as was natural enough, his mind, in this dilemma, reverted to the only friend and confidant he possessed. Accordingly, Castellos was sent for, and, upon his arrival, was made acquainted with the situation of his friend's affairs and the cause of his distress. In the name of that charity which goes right to the heart, he was appealed to by the dying man to prove a protector to the child, as he had been a benefactor to the father.

The old soldier was seriously embarrassed. He was a bachelor, and in the matter of worldly possessions very little better off than the man who was breathing his last. His heart was willing, but he scarcely knew what it was in his power safely to promise.

" You are right," said he, " in supposing that I will cheerfully do all I can to serve the child of my friend;

but I greatly distrust my ability. I know of but one way in which I can take the girl under my protection, without periling her good name ; but as you say she is young and endowed with much beauty, I fear her heart would withhold its consent. My day of gallantry has long been over, and little is left to this weather-tarnished form that would be endurable in a maiden's eyes ; nevertheless, as the sacrifice would be hers, if she should see fit to accept the best offering I can make, she is welcome to such protection as a husband would give."

Eugenie was called into the presence of the two men, and told what had transpired. The old soldier and the girl looked at each other, it being the first time they had ever met. Castellos was then nearly fifty years of age, and retained few of those graces of person which, in his youth, had made him so popular in the most polished Court of Europe. As for the girl, she was all that her father had described her. No sooner, however, had she learned what had passed, than, stepping up to the veteran, she freely put her hand in his, and, in a frank and cheerful voice, delivered her answer :

" Be assured, Sir, that any one that has been kind to my father, cannot be indifferent to me. Such an one I already love for his sake. Nor am I unmindful of the distinction you would confer upon me. Although we have been personally strangers, I have been made familiar with your virtues by many tongues. Therefore, believe me, when I say that I will gladly become your wife, should you deem me worthy of such high honor."

Not only did Eugenie make the dying man happy, but the living one, also. She was not simply content to be an affectionate wife ; she took a deep interest in her husband's affairs. By her persuasion he engaged in certain business transactions that proved highly profitable.

The result was that, without exactly dying a rich man, he succeeded in laying the foundation for an abundant estate for his family.

One son was the issue of Ferdinand Castellos' singular marriage, and he was a mere boy at the time of his father's death. He had, however, a very competent guardian and adviser in his mother. That eminently practical woman managed affairs with great prudence, until her son had reached an age to assume control. The young gentleman fortunately inherited a large share of his mother's sagacity, and, after living a quiet, but busy, life, died one of the richest men in New Orleans.

At the time that this story opens, the Castellos family and estate were represented by a gentleman who, on account of his intimate connection with many of the incidents related, deserves more than a passing notice. Ferdinand Castellos, for the name in full had regularly descended from father to son, was a universally respected citizen of New Orleans. Apart from the name and wealth he had inherited, however, he was distinguished for nothing except his extreme stateliness of appearance and manner. Although fifty years of age at the time he is introduced to the reader, no more commanding figure than his was to be seen upon the streets. Tall and graceful, thoroughly aristocratic in his bearing, and with hair like snow, he never appeared in public without securing a large share of respectful attention.

Otherwise, his virtues were purely of a negative kind. Being possessed of an ample inheritance, he had led an inactive, and, in a measure useless, life. He was a most thorough aristocrat. His philosophy was one admirably suited to an indolent man. It taught him that the good things he enjoyed came not by chance or accident, but in accordance with a universal law regulating human des-

tiny. One principal tenet in his code was the controlling efficacy of blood, not in any sanguinary sense, but as a transmissible quality. He believed he was more fortunate than the majority of men, because he was better born—synonymous in his mind with being born better—an opinion shared by a good many people who have been lucky enough to come into the world with crowns on their heads or silver spoons in their mouths. He had great respect for his American ancestors ; not because of those solid qualities which had provided him the means of living in ease and idleness, but because they were an off-shoot from European nobility. Like all habits of thought, the argument just indicated had strengthened with his years, until, by the time he appears in these pages, he was accustomed to judge of men less by their own characters, than by the characters of their fathers and mothers. The first question with him had become, What kind of blood does he or she possess ?

The better portion of his youth had been passed in the Old World, where he had succeeded in tracing his lineage to a very satisfactory origin. Called home by the death of his father to take possession of a considerable estate, he found little that was congenial among a people who rarely inquired concerning each other's grandfathers, and who, if the truth were known, in very many instances could not have told who their own grandfathers were. His circle of intimate friends, consequently, was limited, being confined to a select few of equally aristocratic tastes.

As may be inferred, the difficulty the young aristocrat experienced in choosing acceptable parties for social intercourse, was greatly increased when it came to the selection of a companion for life. There were plenty of charming women, and, being a courtier both by habit and

instinct, he could easily make himself agreeable to the other sex ; but the one indispensable qualification in his eyes for a wife he found exceedingly rare. More than once did his heart carry him to the verge of a positive committal before investigation disclosed some fatal defect in the lady's pedigree. The consequence was, that his more ardent years had passed before he met with one whose lineage was in all respects unquestionable. The lady herself was not so much of a favorite in his eyes as some others ; nevertheless, he married her.

The satisfaction which followed this unromantic connection, for the marriage was not an unhappy one, was of short duration. The wife lived only long enough to give her husband an heir to his estate and name, perishing in the fulfillment of that obligation.

The mourning widower made no serious effort to supply her vacant place. The trouble of finding a suitable successor, according to his standard of qualification, besides his increasing indisposition for serious effort of any kind, was too great to be thought of after his previous experience. Furthermore, he now had an object to love in his daughter Isabella, whose gentle, loveable nature called out all the warmth of his disposition.

Nor was he without other agreeable companionship. Philip Grandaville, the father of Ruy Grandaville, and he were most intimate friends. For such an association the reader will be prepared to account, from what has been said of the elder Grandaville in one of the opening chapters of this work. Rarely were two men more alike, both in their antecedents and their tastes. Both were descended from noble families ; both had had enterprising ancestors ; and both were content to live upon the accumulations and the memories of their predecessors. That Ferdinand Castellos and Philip Grandaville should

be attracted to each other was perfectly natural ; their very weaknesses strengthening the association.

That such men should seek to cement their friendship, and continue in its purity the superior blood that flowed through their veins, by a family alliance, when the opportunity offered, can be readily understood. They were made happy in the fact that, the heir of one House being a son, and of the other a daughter, and the children being separated by a few years only in their ages, they were enabled at the same time to execute a mutual desire, and put in force their favorite theory concerning the transmission of personal qualities, by arranging a marriage between them. Under such auspicious circumstances it was not deemed necessary to wait until the preferences of the young people might be consulted ; for their consent to such an admirable arrangement could safely be presumed. So it was settled, while Ruy Grandaville and Isabella Castellos were yet children, and too young to appreciate the importance of the step taken in their behalf, that they should marry as soon as a proper age was reached. With this understanding duly impressed upon their minds, they grew to manhood and womanhood, both accepting the situation as one from which there was no likelihood of escape, even if the inclination to seek it should exist. And, as for that matter, there was no apparent cause why the wishes of the parents should not be executed by the children. True, there was no romantic attachment between them ; but plenty of happy marriages, as the world goes, have been consummated without it. There was a proper correspondence in their ages, and neither had ever contemplated nor desired any other result. The only serious impediment that had been interposed, grew out of the unexpected desire of Isabella Castellos to secure the lib-

eration of the slaves to which she had become heir through the will of her deceased relative—the more unexpected, because she had always been noted for her pleasant and yielding temper.

Why the marriage had not been consummated, as had originally been proposed by the parents, several years before the period at which this story opens, is to be attributed to a combination of circumstances. One of these, and by no means unimportant, was a secret preference on the part of both of the young people for the freedom they were enjoying, without so much as a thought, however, on either side, of an ultimate withdrawal from the arrangement to which they were parties. But what contributed more than anything else to the delay which had lengthened from one year to another, was the death of the elder Grandaville, occurring some time before the principal events herein related, and which left young Ruy to the freedom of his own choice of gratification. While still fully assenting to the marriage as an event which was inevitable, and even desirable, he had shown no eagerness to have it carried into effect; but, on the contrary, had quietly interposed obstructions that had led to a continued procrastination. The only party that had exhibited an earnest desire to have the marriage concluded, was Isabella's father, who insisted that it was due to the memory of his deceased friend; but with whom the leading inducement was an anxiety to have the subject off his mind. But so feeble had become his will with the increase of years and the growing indolence of his temper, that he was incapable of a resolute assertion of any purpose. Periodically he had been accustomed to bring the matter up, when one or both of the young people were present, and express his solicitude on the subject; but the seeming willingness of both the parties more im-

mediately interested to an ultimate compliance with his wishes, had always removed any present apprehension, and contented him, for a time at least, to await the movement of some one more energetically disposed. At last the time had come when Ruy Grandaville had decided in his own mind, that the marriage so long delayed, was necessary to save him from financial embarrassment, and that at an early day.

But, before dismissing the subject of the old people, and taking up the thread of events with which we have more particularly to deal, it is proper that the reader should be made acquainted with one or two additional incidents growing out of the intimacy which had so long existed between the elder Grandaville and Ferdinand Castellos.

The latter had occasion, at one of those indolent conferences between them, which had been of almost daily occurrence for years, to make known the affliction he was enduring by reason of his inability to find an efficient and reliable body servant.

" You can't imagine the distress," said he, " which my man's awkwardness gives me. Why, could you believe it, only day before yesterday he spilt a bottle of cologne upon my best waistcoat, utterly spoiling it ; and though I had him well whipped, this very morning he emptied a glass of wine upon my dressing-gown. I had him punished, of course ; but it seems to be of no use. Its in the blood, and nothing can change it. That's the way, you know, everything that's good or evil comes in this world."

" Why did you not speak of this before ? " said his sympathizing friend. " Its too bad that you should be suffering in that way, when I happen to have the very thing you need. A capital article, I assure you. Quick,

willing, and as intelligent as a slave has a right to be. He's only half black, and you'll know how to account for my confidence in his qualities, when I tell you that I consider myself responsible for one-half the blood in his veins. His name is Felix."

"I understand," responded Castellos with a knowing laugh at his companion's allusion to the source of Felix' qualifications.

"Now, my dear sir," continued the other, "you must accept that boy as a proof of my desire to promote your comfort. You will find him a treasure, I assure you. And for my part, I will have the satisfaction of knowing that he will be in the best of hands. We never can wholly repress a parental feeling, you know, although in such cases it doesn't answer generally to acknowledge its existence. But then, between old friends who understand each other as we do, its all right."

The concluding observation was spoken in a tone of solemnity due to the gravity of the subject.

"Thanks! a world of thanks! my dear Grandaville," replied Castellos. "You don't know how I appreciate your kindness. But the obligation shall not be all on one side. Fortunately, I am in a situation to repay your generosity both in kind and quality. I have something, likewise, I can recommend. The best of blood, too, I assure you; direct from the veins of the great Ferdinand. She's a beauty—my little girl is. Her mother is almost white, and her own complexion is so pure you'd never suspect there was a particle of negro in it."

"A boy and a girl—well, that is a coincidence, I confess," exclaimed Grandaville, with a lightsome laugh. "An idea strikes me right here. We have happily arranged for one union between our families, but why should we stop with one? Good blood ought to be

cared for in one station as well as in another. Why not strengthen the alliance between the Castellos' and the Grandavilles by a marriage of children we do not publicly acknowledge, as well as of the heirs and representatives of our houses? What say you?"

"Excellent," responded Castellos. "The very thing, I declare!"

And, before the friends had separated, it was understood that another link was to be added to the bond between them, by the intermarriage of the slave children who had been the subjects of the conversation just given.

Two or three days afterwards there was a formal exchange of papers between Ferdinand Castellos and Philip Grandaville, whereby the first was made the owner of Felix, and the latter of Isabella, both described as slaves. The effect of the documents was not only to change the masters, but the destinies of two human beings.

Castellos was delighted with his acquisition. Felix fully sustained the character his former owner had given him. He soon made himself indispensable to his new master's comfort. The latter was profoundly grateful, not to Felix, but to Philip Grandaville, to whom he gave all the credit for the slave's good qualities; for was it not the blood that was in his veins that accounted for his superiority? His case furnished another confirmation of Castellos' favorite theory.

Nevertheless, Felix failed not to receive numerous substantial tokens of his master's good opinion; and, in addition, was assured of a still greater reward in prospect. That reward, he was told, was a wife, for whom provision had already been made. Whatever his real appreciation of such a favor, the slave-boy was crafty

enough to exhibit nothing but seeming delight at the intelligence.

But, satisfactory as seemed the arrangements for the union of the two families to all parties concerned, it was to end in failure, so far as the unacknowledged children were involved. The circumstance which mainly affected that result, was the sudden and wholly unaccountable disappearance of Felix. In vain did his master wait one morning for the attentions he was accustomed to receive at his hands, being almost as dependent upon his valet's offices as a child upon the care of its nurse. Felix failed to present himself with his usual promptitude, and, upon being sent for, was nowhere to be found. Castellos was in equal distress of body and mind. His dressing-gown needed airing ; its owner was to be shaved ; his coffee had to be served ; and numerous attentions were required, which no one could render like Felix. But where was Felix gone ? To the intimation that, perhaps, he had absconded, his master returned an indignant negative. The thing was impossible. What had he to complain of ? Had he not always been treated kindly ? Did he not know all about the wife he was to receive ? And, besides, was he not of the very best stock, which was a sure guaranty of his fidelity ? And still further, if he had intentionally fled, how did it happen that his master's money and jewelry, to all of which he had had access, was untouched. No, no ; Felix had not run away.

That he was the victim of foul play was the conclusion of his afflicted owner ; and upon that hypothesis the police were applied to, and the case extensively advertised. But all to no effect. Days, weeks and months went by, and nothing was learned of Felix, until one day a letter was received, bearing the post-mark of Montreal, Canada. The epistle was as follows :

MONTREAL, November — 18—.

“ My Dear Sir, and my late Master :

“ As you are, doubtless, surprised at my absence, and will naturally be solicitous for my safety, it is due, on account of the many kindnesses I have received at your hands, that I should acquaint you with my whereabouts, as well as explain my conduct.

“ I did not run away from you like a slave ; I left New Orleans like a gentleman. Thanks to your liberality, when I resolved upon the attempt to obtain my freedom, I possessed ample means to pay for first-class travelling accommodations. I went on board a steamer about to sail for New York, and, as Hamilton Smith, Jr., secured passage for that port, paying for the best the vessel afforded. I was treated with marked respect by all on board throughout the voyage. I did not find it very difficult to disguise the limited amount of African that appeared in my complexion, and you know that in your service, and that of my former owner, I enjoyed every opportunity to acquire the manners of a gentleman. For any one to have hinted that the easy and affable Hamilton Smith, Jr., was not what he purported to be, would have been looked upon as a perilous proceeding ; for he made no secret of the fact that he was a Southern gentleman, entertaining a Southern gentleman’s peculiar views.

“ Well, I reached New York in safety, stopped at a leading hôtel, took my time in seeing the city, and then proceeded Northward, via Saratoga, the White Mountains, etc., journeying leisurely, and stopping at prominent points of interest, as a young Southerner seeking pleasure might be expected to do, and in due time reached and crossed the border.

“ Once in Canada, there was no further occasion for disguise. I became plain Felix, and at once sought the means of earning an honest livelihood. In this, with the experience I had had in your service, I found no difficulty. I am now comfortably established in a first-class barber-shop in the *Rue Notre Dame*, of this city. My health is good, and I think this climate will agree with my constitution.

"Why did I leave my pleasant home with you for a life among strangers? I know you will ask. It was because I was a slave, property, merchandise with you, and I wanted to be a man. I felt that I was a human being, and that it was a duty I owed alike to myself and to my Great Master, to assert the right to which I was born. It was no sudden fancy. The desire to be my own master was a dream from childhood. I have no doubt it was born with me. And let me tell you, that there is not a slave on a Southern plantation, whatever the color of his skin, with whom that thought is not ever present. I say this, that you may see it was no act of yours that drove me away, and that nothing you could have done would have prevented my effort for freedom.

"I did not leave you without a measure of regret; and here, by way of partial compensation for the loss I have caused you of one slave, I release you from your promise to provide me a wife in the person of another slave. I will undertake to secure a wife for myself. And, what is equally to my satisfaction, my children, should Heaven ever bless me with any, will be free.

"I have another offer to submit—besides very many thanks for your indulgence, which I beg of you to accept—and that is a tender of my services as your grateful attendant, should you ever come North, as long as you remain upon the soil of Canada. I hope you will do so. The visit would be beneficial to your health, and I doubt not would give you new impressions of men and things. I can vouch for the agreeableness of the journey. Let me know, should you resolve to travel this way, and I will meet you at the border.

"With my best wishes for your continued health and welfare, I remain,

"Your Obedient Servant (not Slave)

"FELIX."

"FERDINAND CASTELLOS, Esq., New Orleans, La."

The above saucy epistle, instead of overthrowing, only strengthened, the writer's late master's confidence in the soundness of his favorite theory. It showed how even

the best blood, such as Felix had in his veins, might be corrupted and neutralized by the infusion of another and the inferior African element, thus proving the inestimable value of a pure, tried article. The inconsistency involved was of no consequence to a mind so comfortably constituted, that it could make premises bend to conclusions—not conclusions to premises. Nor was the slave-governing system the only one to foster such a disposition. Religion, politics, science—have they not all been witnesses to the same phenomenon !

CHAPTER II.

SOUTH VS. NORTH.

“  ID you see Hawks, Boney ! ”

“ Yes, Massa.”

“ What did he say ? ”

“ Dat he’d hab de gratification ob callin’ on
you dis mornin.’ ”

“ The gratification !—confound the scoundrel and his impudence. I wonder if he has any conception of the contempt I entertain for creatures of his class, and for himself in particular? He is the most insufferable knave I ever knew—the oiliest, coolest, most self-important scamp of my acquaintance ; and the Lord knows there are enough bad men its been my fortune to become intimate with. How did he appear to take it, Boney, when you told him I wanted to see him ? ”

“ Him jess grin all ober him skinney face.”

“ No doubt of it ! No doubt of it ! He thinks it quite an honor to be sent for by a gentleman, especially when he suspects that gentleman’s in a condition to minister to his miserable rapacity. These Yankees are absolutely unconscionable. They want both your society and your money. They’ll bow and cringe and smile to have you recognize them and introduce them to your set, and then they’ll buy, or trade, or gamble you out of all you’ve got. I detest the whole race of them ; but a Yankee negro-trader, bah ! Its bad enough for a Southern man, born and bred in the midst of the thing, to deal in his own flesh and blood ; but a Yankee, when he gets

into it, seems positively to like the business. He's a natural born buzzard. A Southern man who follows it as a trade to which he's been educated, knows the meanness of the thing. He keeps out of sight, when decent people are about ; but a Northern man, when he takes to the negro trade, will fling both himself and his business in your face. That Hawks, the worst of them all—the snivelling, vulgar, insulting coxcomb—wants to be a gentleman, when he follows a traffic a pirate would blush at."

"Come, come, Boney, hurry up with the shaving. I must be ready to meet the villain. I wish it was with pistols for two, instead of to drive a detestable bargain. But what's the use of scolding ? I can't help myself. But it won't do for me to show weakness, or the Yankee will skin me alive. That's his nature. He must not suspect my necessity. My game is to put on an air of importance, and then he'll do the cringing for both of us. If I'm indifferent, he'll be eager.

"There, Boney, that will answer. Now, my coat—no, my morning-gown. I'd better appear in easy costume. A little negligence's the thing. Too much care would make him think I had been preparing to meet him. Boney, it's a hard case, a devilish hard case, when your master has to prepare to receive a low, vile Yankee negro-trader in his own apartments. Once we'd have kicked him out soon enough. But the fact is, I'm hard up, want money, must have it, and yourself and the darkeys on the old plantation are all I've got to make it out of. Boney, do you want to be sold ? "

"No, Massa, no ! De Lord prevent ! O, you couldn't possibly go an' do it, nohow !—me dat's served you so long. Don't be a-talkin' dat way, Massa !—now don't."

"Well, well ; I don't want to part with you, or any of

the people, for that matter ; but something's got to be done, Boney. I must have money, and that right away. My luck's been awful of late, and it won't do to have anything said about it now. Old Castellos must not hear of my losses, or he might get his eyes open. If he were not a regular old granny, he'd have known all about it long ago. The only way is to pay up, and maintain my credit. Ha ! ha ! its comical to be sure—the rich Ruy Grandaville, whom everybody flatters and courts, yes, and swindles, having to sell the family niggers to meet his debts of honor. That affair with Solorgne, Boney, was a mighty unlucky piece of business. By the way, I dreamt of the poor devil last night. Wonder what business he's got to come back ? He's dead. Yes, that time, Boney, I killed the goose that laid the golden eggs. But it couldn't be helped (a sigh). 'Twas my fault, though. I ought never to have taken him near the plantation. I might have known Isabella would bewitch him. Fool ! fool ! that I was, not to know the power of that woman—she who fascinated even me, Ruy Grandaville, who's made playthings of so many of her sex. By Heavens, I love her still, spite of her infidelity and her defiance ! ”

At this point the speaker was walking hastily up and down the room, with a heavy frown upon his brow.

“ That woman's a mystery,” he went on. “ She's more like a queen than a slave. How she did stand up to my face, and demand fair play for her lover—her paramour ; she a slave—me her master ! It was magnificent. Jupiter ! what a figure she would make at the head of a gentleman's establishment. I wish to God the situation were changed. I'd rather marry her, a thousand times over, than the gentle, yielding, dutiful—— Boney, Boney, get me some brandy. Quick ! I say, or I'll sell you this hour. I want something to nerve me up. There ! that's

better. Take the glass. Bah ! what's the use of worrying one's self? Things must take their course. That dream's got to be given up. The time's come when I must act. Its reformation now, or marriage. Its a dreadful alternative, I know ; but when bankruptcy and dishonor stares a man in the face, he ought to be prepared for something desperate. It would be more magnanimous, I suppose, to give up my vagabond companions, release the girl I don't love, and let her make some more worthy fellow happy, and go forth myself to starve. But no, there are not many that would do that. I've drank too long at the giddy bowl to throw it away now. Its vastly easier to smother conscience, and resign one's self to a marriage of convenience and a life of luxury, even without the condiment of love. Money's too important an element in my case. Yes, yes, I'd better marry, and marry soon. The glass, Boney ! Just another drop ! There ! there ! that will do. Now I'm ready for the Yankee. There's somebody at the door now. See who it is. If its Hawks, tell him to walk in."

It is needless to explain to the reader who was the principal in the above conversation, or rather soliloquy, for the most of it was addressed to a companion merely from the force of habit, and a block of wood would have answered the same purpose. As will be inferred, Boney —Napoleon Bonaparte was the name in full—was a slave and Ruy Grandaville's valet. He had, in fact, been his master's attendant from his boyhood up, being by quite a number of years his senior. Small in frame, his body was as light and active as a boy's, although his kinky hair had turned nearly white with age, contrasting strangely with his full African complexion. He faithfully loved his master, and thought of nothing in the world but

how to serve him. And as for Grandaville, his confidence in his servant was attested by the habit into which he had fallen, of making him a talking post for all his humors and fancies.

Grandaville was correct in surmising the new-comer to be Hawks, the Yankee. That individual, who has not heretofore been introduced to the reader, as he appeared in the doorway opened to admit him, was a tall man, with a thin face that had something so apparently rueful in its expression as to make it almost comical to look at. He was, on this occasion, elaborately gotten up. His clothes were of the most fashionable cut ; a profusion of jewelry glittered about his breast ; and a small cane was awkwardly held in one gloved hand.

As the door was opened by Boney, in dashed the visitor with a movement so smart, and a bow so profound, that his body came in collision with the negro's, and his descending head gave Boney's a considerable thump. There was a recoil, and the Yankee looked about him in grave bewilderment before he could speak.

" Beg pardon ! beg pardon ! Dem it, what d'u mean, you black scoundrel ? Fine morning, Mr. Grandaville, fine morning. Out of the way, you infernal nigger. Hope I see you well, Mr. Grandaville ; hope I see you well. Don't care if I have cracked your blasted skull, you tarnal scare-crow."

During the delivery of this mixed salutation, Grandaville stood with his back to the speaker. He had taken his station before a large mirror, where he was industriously engaged in adjusting his cravat, but in a position to see all that transpired. It was some time before he could trust his voice to respond, if he had desired to do so. Meanwhile, Hawks had been bowing and scraping in the centre of the room.

"Sit down," said Grandaville gruffly, when at last he did speak, without turning from the mirror.

Hawks dropped into a chair as if he had been shot, astonished and crest-fallen at the incivility of his reception.

Grandaville went on with his occupation at the mirror for a minute or two longer ; then assumed one or two postures before the glass, as if studying the effect of the arrangement he had made ; and then, as if suddenly remembering something, he turned sharply upon his visitor.

"Good morning, Sir ; and to what, may I ask, do I owe the honor of so early a call ?"

"I—I beg pardon, if—if I've come too soon. I did not know—that is, I'm a man of business. No offence, I hope. Thought you wanted me. Beg pardon, if—beg pardon."

Grandaville had placed the Yankee at a further disadvantage by suggesting to his mind the idea of some breach of etiquette, a point on which he was particularly sensitive.

"Ah ! I remember now," began Grandaville slowly, as if undergoing a mental effort, retaining at the same time a standing position. "I believe, Mr. Hawks, you hold some of my paper. No great amount, I daresay, as I make it a point to take care of it, before it greatly accumulates. I suppose you are anxious for your money."

"Not at all, Mr. Grandaville ! not at all ! I would not have mentioned it—hope you won't suspect such a thing. I really dew."

Another disadvantage for Hawks, in supposing himself accused of an intention to dun the man whose goodwill he was anxious to secure.

"O ! its of little consequence, Mr. Hawks. I merely asked to satisfy myself," replied Grandaville in a tone of quiet indifference. Then, as if the matter had just

suggested itself, he added : " I believe you sometimes deal in slaves as well as negotiable paper. Am I rightly informed ? "

Here was a relief for the embarrassed Hawks. He was proud of his business, as it was one which brought him in contact with slave-holders. And besides, believing that he thoroughly understood the subject, it was one upon which he felt that he could talk without blundering.

" O yes, Mr. Grandaville, I buys and sells a deal of niggers. I dew indeed. I flatter myself that I'm as good a judge of 'em, if I wus brought up in New England, as the best of you Southerners. I rather think I'm naterly suited to the business."

" I should certainly think you were."

The sneer which accompanied these words was lost on Hawks.

" Thanks, Mr. Grandaville, thanks for the compliment ! I appreciates your good opinion ; I dew, indeed. Can I dew anything for you in that line ? Would be pleased if I could."

" Perhaps you can," said Grandaville coolly. " I happen to have on hand at present a few people that I do not need. You may have them upon fair terms. I have made out a list of them, with their ages, qualifications, and the prices which I think they ought to bring. I suppose, Mr. Hawks, my word will be accepted as a sufficient guaranty for the character of the property."

" Certainly, certainly, Mr. Grandaville. Your word is sufficient for everything connected with it."

" That being the case, Mr. Hawks, the amount of those notes of mine you hold can be credited on the price of the slaves, and the difference you can pay me in cash."

With these words, Grandaville handed the Yankee the paper he had alluded to.

Hawks winced terribly as his eyes ran over it. He saw at a glance that the prices set down considerably exceeded the market value of the property. For some time he sat irresolute, debating whether he should repudiate the arrangement or submit to it, during which his countenance took on such an increase of ruefulness as to make it really pitiable to look upon. He was excessively fond of money, but, at the same time he was beset by a craving desire to gain admission to fashionable society, having made up his mind that he had accumulated wealth enough to stand the increased expense. Ruy Grandaville he looked upon as the leader of the set he was ambitious to enter, and whether the amount of money involved was worth the loss of his friendship, was the question. His natural avariciousness might even then have gained the victory, had he not been conscious that Grandaville's eye was upon him, and the secret dread he entertained of his companion proved sufficient to turn the scale. So, gulping down his chagrin with an effort, he endeavored to put on a grateful look, and announced his satisfaction with the terms proposed.

His point gained, Grandaville's manner quickly changed. He argued that the Yankee might be useful to him another time, and it was better, therefore, to treat him with courtesy. Accordingly, putting on an air of graciousness that quite fascinated Hawks, he invited him to join him at breakfast. Concealing the fact that he had already breakfasted, Hawks gladly accepted the invitation, and the two men were soon seated at the table upon apparently the most cordial terms.

"That's a right handy nigger you've got," said Hawks, turning his eyes full upon Boney, who at the time was waiting upon his master and his guest. "What amount have you concluded you would part with him for?"

"O, Napoleon Bonaparte and I are such old cronies that I have not yet made up my mind to dispose of him," replied Grandaville, smiling at the fire he saw in his old servant's eye.

And, in fact, the look with which the old negro regarded the Yankee, exceeded in wrathfulness the one which followed the awkward collision at the door. Nor was he long in obtaining satisfaction. Having occasion, a moment afterwards, to pass a cup of steaming hot coffee over the Yankee's shoulder, his hand—something it had never been known to do before—suddenly grew unsteady, and down went the contents upon Hawks' arm and hand.

With a yell of pain the Yankee sprang to his feet, and made a grab for the offender, which the latter was agile enough to elude. Then began a most exciting chase. Round and round the room went pursued and pursuer, the latter fairly foaming with rage, while Grandaville leaned back almost convulsed with merriment. The contest, owing to the superior wind the Yankee's youthfulness gave him, was likely to be an unequal one, when Napoleon changed his tactics, by taking a low ottoman in the course of his flight. Over it skilfully skipped the negro, but Hawks, whose eye was fixed upon his prey, stumbling at the obstruction, plunged forward and came heavily upon the floor. He was considerably stunned by the fall, and his fashionably cut garments and stylish jewelry suffered even more than his person. A woeful figure, with bloody nose, torn clothing and broken watch-chain, did he present, when Grandaville, having succeeded in overcoming his laughter, assisted him to his feet. By the use of water and towel, and encouraged by some gracious words from his host, and some cross ones addressed to Boney, Hawks was at last restored to good

humor and his seat at the table. There, under the skilful flattery of Grandaville, and the influence of a few glasses of excellent wine, he was soon in such jolly mood that he went forth, after the meal was over, with an uncommon light in his eye, and a step, although slightly unsteady, more than ordinarily buoyant.

"Wal, that Southern chap did git a leetle the advantage of me this time," said he, as the fresh air brightened up his faculties, and set him to reviewing the bargain he had made. "It all comes of the superior manners and breedin' of them Southerners. I can manage the niggers with any of them, but I'm not yit up to some of the ways of the bosses. But I'll be even with him yit. I've got what wins in the long run. It's my gold agin his brass. He'll be wantin' more money soon, and then'll be my chance. He'll have more niggers to sell. Such fellers is always wantin' money, and I calc'late in the end I'll own both niggers and master. Meanwhile, if I can make him shove me inter good society, I've made the main pint. I can take my time to pluckin' the goose afterwards. But now for my new purchase."

With that, Hawks took out the memorandum Grandaville had given him, and looked it carefully over. It was as follows :

" Washington, age 44, field hand, sound, . . .	\$1,200
Jefferson, age 24, mechanic, sound,	2,500
Pomp, age 50, field hand, one eye,	800
Hester, age 30, cook, sound,	1,800
Columbus, age 15, mulatto, sound,	1,000
Pete, age 20, field hand, sound,	1,400
Susanna, age 18, handsome mulatto, sound,	2,000"

"Susanna," repeated Hawks, "age eighteen, handsome mulatto, sound, price two thousand dollars—it's a big figger to give, but them's the kind that brings the money."

CHAPTER III.

TAKING UP THE THREAD.

HE reader has learned that there were two persons of the name of Isabella, children of Ferdinand Castellos, one the daughter of his deceased wife, the other slave-born—a state of things not very remarkable under the somewhat patriarchal system of American slavery. By a singular coincidence, one of these children became the intended wife of Ruy Grandaville, and the other, having been transferred to his father, in exchange for the slave-boy Felix, became Ruy Grandaville's property ; and, as he confessed to his servant Boney, or rather to himself in Boney's presence, the latter had the stronger hold upon his affections. A word in further explanation of the events leading to this state of things may not here be amiss.

The slave daughter was the elder of the two by a few days only, and her mother had been called in, upon the death of Ferdinand Castellos' wife, to take charge of the newly-born infant that survived her. The two children drew their nourishment from the same breast during the first months of their existence, and were inseparable playmates until the fourth or fifth year of their ages. To any one's but the father's partial eyes, the slave-child would have appeared to possess more of the paternal characteristics than the other, being taller, stronger, and even of a fairer complexion, the slave-mother having barely a trace of the African stock. But to Ferdinand

Castellos the delicate, timid little girl that was the hope of his house, was the object of such absorbing interest that he scarcely gave a thought to her companion. It was not until the age above mentioned, that his attention was seriously called to the peculiarities of the two children, when an incident occurred that led to their permanent separation.

Happening one day, about that time, to be a witness of their plays, the father noticed that the slave-daughter assumed a very decided authority over the other, putting on all the little childish airs of conscious superiority, which were meekly and cheerfully submitted to. He was astonished and chagrined to think that the lawful representative of his illustrious line should submit to direction from one of inferior origin, and he determined to remove the objectionable influence at once. Still, as he could not be wholly indifferent to one whose natural claim upon him was so strong, the act was marked by no spirit of unkindness. The little slave-girl was sent to a distant boarding-school, whose educational advantages were first-class, where she was permitted to remain from year to year. There she grew up, nothing in her complexion betraying her birth, not only without a suspicion of her servile origin among those about her, but in ignorance of it herself. As for her father, whose care for her was limited to paying her bills as they matured, he rarely gave her a thought. Not having seen her since she went forth from his house, he continued to regard her as a little girl, and acted under that impression in making the transfer to his friend Philip Grandaville. It was under an equally erroneous impression that the transfer was accepted, Grandaville supposing that he was about to come into possession of a servant whom he could send immediately into his kitchen. Great was his astonishment and confusion when

there was placed upon his hands an accomplished and brilliant young lady, whose qualifications were such only as became the parlor and library. What added to his embarrassment, was the fact that his son Ruy was daily expected to return from a foreign tour, to fulfil, as was understood, the matrimonial engagement long arranged for him with the heiress of the Castellos' estate. Naturally, he feared the effect of such charms as he saw the new servant possessed, should she come in the way of his son. In this emergency, he could think of nothing better than to send her to his country plantation. The arrangement would have answered very well, had not Ruy, while on a hunting excursion, visited the old plantation, and there encountered the hidden beauty. His fascination was complete, the circumstances of the case giving quite an air of romance to the meeting, particularly as Isabella, though a slave, was not one to yield to the first overtures of a lover. Henceforward, he became such a devoted Nimrod as to pass much of his time in hunting excursions. And, at the same time, he was moved to invent numerous pretexts for delaying his contemplated marriage; and his father soon afterwards dying, he found himself in a position to further postpone his nuptials with the one Isabella, while he could assert a master's authority over the other. Thus had events run on.

But while the presence of the slave-daughter was found objectionable to Ferdinand Castellos, the mother was not only permitted to remain, but to retain the principal charge of the heiress of his house. This woman was far superior to the majority of her class. She was nearly white, and possessed, not only of decided elements of character, but of considerable personal beauty. As may be inferred, she was something of a

favorite with her master before the birth of the children, and circumstances then transpired to greatly strengthen her hold upon his regard. Her care of her little motherless charge had been most devoted, abating nothing when her own child had been sent away from her. She secured the entire affection of the daughter, which was the surest avenue to the heart of the father. And besides, having been advanced, step by step, to the position of principal housekeeper, she had managed to make herself so useful to her master in his increasing years and indolence of disposition, as at last to appear indispensable to his comfort. At the time that my story opens, nearly everything connected with the household was entrusted to her management. The power she enjoyed was used with fair discretion, although it was not at all strange that even her master sometimes felt its exercise to be somewhat tyrannical and irksome. He, however, had by that time lost the strength of purpose necessary to throw off her authority, had he felt so inclined. Her name was Esther, and by the time she appears in the incidents here recorded, she had, after the manner that prevailed among slaves, become known as Aunt Esther.

The foregoing preliminaries being disposed of, I will now ask the reader to accompany me to the apartments of Ferdinand Castellos, at a date preceding, by a few days, the riot of which an account is given in Part I. The suite of rooms reserved for the private use of that gentleman, were such as became an elegant and wealthy citizen. As we enter, we find the proprietor reclining in a large, luxurious chair, in the enjoyment of that state of idleness which was becoming daily more and more grateful. His quiet, however, is not to be undisturbed. A gentle tap comes at the door. Without changing his position, Castellos bids whoever is there to

enter, at the same time that a slight shade, indicative of annoyance, passes over his brow. The door opens, and a female, rather over the middle age, large and matronly in appearance, with something softly winning in the expression of her countenance, quietly enters. Her complexion is touched with just enough color to betray an African connection, and her hair waves slightly, but her features are remarkably regular. She is Aunt Esther.

The policy of the woman at once appears in the pleasant manner in which she inquires after her master's health. The shadow entirely leaves Castellos' brow, as he assures her of his comfort. Then there is a moment's silence, which is clearly one of anticipation.

"I'se come," began the woman, seeing that the time to speak had arrived, "to speak 'cernin' your daughter."

"Isabella!—is she sick, or has anything happened her?" inquired the old man, partly raising himself in his seat, and looking anxiously in the face of the woman.

"No, no! de dear chile am bery well. De Lor' forbid dat anyting should happen her!" responded the servant with a warmth that could not have been wholly simulated.

Then there was a pause, after which the speaker proceeded :

"What a comfort a 'fectionate, 'bedient chile must be, to be sure!"

"And what a care!" added the father with a sigh. "There is no telling the anxiety the dear girl has caused me, left motherless to my sole charge—and yours," the last words being accompanied with a glance of kindly acknowledgment. "But, thank Heaven! the greatest burden is taken off my mind by an arrangement with my deceased friend, Grandaville. My daughter is secure in a good husband, and a happy settlement in life, and I

can dismiss the subject from my thoughts. What a satisfaction!"

"An' am it really so, dat de 'rangement fur de marriage 'tween Missey Bella an' young Grandaville, dat I'se heard spoken 'bout, am to come off? I'se hab tought ——"

"To be sure it is! To be sure it is!" interrupted Castellos with decided emphasis, mixed with a little petulance. "Its what I've been anxious for all the time, that the subject might be off my mind; but the young folks did not seem to know what was best. I did not like to press the matter."

"I'se did not feel certain——"

"No uncertainty, no uncertainty about the matter," interrupted Castellos with some impatience, "and no more delay, Heaven be praised! Ruy Grandaville at last seems as anxious to have the contract concluded as I have been all the time. Consider all the arrangements about the house in your own hands. I give you full power. A woman's judgment in such matters is better than a man's, and you were always wonderfully clever. What a relief it will be when the affair is over! Let there be no delay!"

"But Massa, I'se wants to ax you one question. You'll pardon de liberty I'se takes 'count ob de 'fection I'se has fur Missey Bella. I'se jess feel 'most dat she am my own chile, and dat I'se has de right to speak. Is you certain dat, in de 'rangement you'se made, Bella's gwine to hab de man dat's worthy ob her?"

"Worthy of her! What do you mean?" retorted the old man with a sharpness that betrayed no little irritation. "Worthy of her! Why, Philip Grandaville was not only my best friend, but the best man I ever knew. His son has the best blood in the country. Its blood

that's been tried for generations, mixed with none of your latter day, the-Lord-knows-where-from adulterations. What can you say to his disparagement, I should like to know."

"Nothin', nothin' ob my own knowledge; but dar is reports. Thar may be nothin' in dem—I'se hopes thar izzn't—but might it not be well dat you'se should inquire?"

"Well, what has report to say against Ruy Grandaville? Jealousy of his birth, I doubt not, is at the bottom of it all. Some of those low-born, worthless creatures' talk."

"Dat may be so. I'se hopes it is; but dey do say dat he gambles—O! so terribly; dat he'se spendin' all his money."

"Ruy may be a little too easy with his money. I remember that his father was always very free-handed. The young men of the present day, I fear, are entirely too thoughtless. When I was young, I occasionally risked something at play myself. I shall speak to Ruy. A word of caution can do no harm."

"But——"

"But—what next?"

"Dey talks ob his—what is him called?—lib—liber—libertinism—dat's de name."

"A charge, I apprehend, which might be brought against a good many young men of respectable birth. The times are a great deal worse than they used to be, Esther; and yet few of us were altogether blameless. You would hardly say that I was not fit to become the head of a family, and, at the same time, I don't think you would assert that, when somewhat younger than I am, I was exactly a Joseph. We must trust to time to do its work with Ruy."

The quizzical glance with which they were spoken,

more than the words, brought a bright color to Esther's brow and cheek.

"But dat's not de wust."

"What! more accusations? But of course, of course they will talk against any one of Ruy Grandaville's birth—the miserable pack of fatherless nobodies. O! their malignity is unbearable. But what else have they to say?"

"Massa, dey says dat Ruy Grandaville's 'fections am eleswhar; an' dat, after spendin' all he'se got on de favorite an' dem dat's wuss, he'se jess gwine to marry your chile, Missey Bella, dat's an' angel, fur de sake ob de property, to save hisself from 'splosure an' ruin."

"O, the villains! the slanderers! the low, base-born miscreants! whoever would have supposed their jealousy could have carried them so far?"

The speaker was now on his feet, his former listlessness all gone, pacing up and down the room with nervous footsteps and a countenance hot with anger.

"But stop," he added after a few rapid turns. "I'll hear no more of their inventions. To question the honor of the son of Philip Grandaville, who was closer to me than a brother. I know every drop of blood in his body. Its come down through generations of honorable men—men that were noble in a noble land—and to think of creatures positively ignorant of their own fathers, imputing baseness to the inheritor of such qualities. But not another word, not another word of their villifications. Esther, hasten the preparations for the marriage. Let us get this business over, that the matter may be off my mind. The worry of it will kill me, if it goes on much longer. Use your own discretion in everything. There now, let us say no more about it."

With that, Ferdinand Castellos threw himself back into

his chair, and the old complacent look began to steal over his countenance. Esther was crafty enough to see that nothing more was to be accomplished by pressing the subject at that time, her master's love of repose, and still more, his confidence in the efficacy of inherited blood making him proof against all charges derogatory to Ruy Grandaville. Accordingly, with a gracious smile upon her countenance, she bowed herself out of his presence.

But no sooner was the door shut between her and her master, than a bitter expression took the place of the smile upon her face, and raising her clenched hand, as if to threaten some obnoxious object, she hissed out between her teeth :

“ He’se not a-gwine to marry her, if I’se de power to stop it—dat he shan’t. Jess as if one woman warn’t ‘nough fur him to render mis’rable fureber an’ fureber.”

It was evident that Aunt Esther had not lost sight of the other Isabella.

The outward exhibition of anger was but momentary. Quickly suppressing all evidence of such feeling, she went directly to the apartment of her foster-daughter, and with a brow perfectly composed, entered her presence.

“ What’s dis I’se a-hearin’ ‘bout you’se gwine to marry an’ leab us so soon?” asked the old lady, as soon as kindly greetings had been exchanged.

“ O, no, dear mamma! my marriage need not involve our separation.”

“ But it brings anoder in ‘tween us.”

Then, after brushing away a tear, or seeming to, she went on :

“ Dis Massa Ruy; is you’se sure dat you’se lubs him —lubs him well ‘nough to be his wife?”

“ I have always liked Ruy,” replied Miss Castellos with a look of some amazement.

"Den does you tink dat he lubs you agin, 'way down in de heart as de man ought'r dat takes de woman fur his wife? I'se foolish, 'haps, in axin' dese questions; but, Bella, I'se allers lub'd you as my own chile, an' I'se so 'ticular when anyting 'cerns your happiness."

"Yes, yes, mamma, I know you are the best old soul in the world; and you are certain of my love, whether anybody else is or not."

And with that the speaker enforced her words with a kiss.

"But why should I doubt Ruy's sincerity?" she continued. "He has asked me to be his wife. He has lived in the expectation that I should be his wife."

"Dat's jess it. De old folks 'ranged it all when you war a leetle prattler on my knee, an' Massa Ruy, he'se been all dis time a-makin' up his mind to hab de 'greement 'forced. Dat makes me 'spicious. It's been a bery long time."

"Well, for that matter, I presume I have been quite as much to blame as Ruy. But I don't see why you should begin to distrust him, when he does insist on his right under the contract."

"De fac' is, chile, I'se don't understand Massa Ruy. If dar war only you'se own sweet self, I'd neber 'spicion nuffin'—but dar'se de property."

"O, mamma, I begin to discover what's the matter," said Isabella, laughing. "You're jealous. You want to keep me all to yourself, you dear, loving, old darling, that you are! There's a kiss to cure you. But, mamma, I've got something to tell you, which will quite relieve you of your apprehensions. You, perhaps, know that a large portion of the property I have inherited consists of slaves, amounting, it is said, to a good many thousand dollars. Now, I am resolved that all my people shall be free. If I had the power, I'd set them at liberty at once,

without anybody's help. But it so happens that I can do nothing of the kind for a good many years yet, owing to something a certain will has to say about it, unless I get married, and my husband helps me in the matter. Accordingly, I've made up my mind that whoever marries me, must bind himself in advance to conform to that one wish of mine. So, you see, I've got a test for my lover. If he marries me without the property, I'm sure of his affection. If he declines, I can congratulate myself in having so perfect a touch-stone to apply to his feelings. I've notified Ruy of the condition. I have not done so because I distrust him, but because I regard it as a matter of justice to the poor people whom Providence has placed in my power, and who, I believe, to be as much entitled to their freedom as I am. Now Mamma, don't you think I'm safe?"

The look of pleasant triumph with which the last words were spoken quite silenced the questioner. If not exactly satisfied, Aunt Esther was shrewd enough to see that the surest way to interest Isabella in Ruy Grandaville, would be to attack him, and make her his champion. Accordingly, she ceased her opposition, and changed the direction of her remarks.

"I allers know'd you'se had de best heart in de world, an' dat proves it. But Bella," she continued, "dar'se one ting I'se should like to ax fur my own self."

Meeting with an assuring smile, the speaker went on :

"Your father, Bella, allers told me dat, in 'sideration ob my care ob you'se when you'se war a baby, he war a-gwine to make me a free woman. Now so long as ole Massa lib an' I'se can stay with you, I'se don't want no change ; but Massa's gettin' to be an ole man——"

"I understand, Mamma. I shall speak to father about it at once, and have him fulfil his promise."

"No, chile, no ; you'se don't understand de whole. Fur myself I'se care bery leetle. I'se got to be an ole woman now, an' it don't make much difference what comes ob de balance ob my days. But dar'se one fur whom I'se does care. You'se may not 'member her, fur you'se war a bery leetle girl when dey sent her 'way ; but O ! I'se neber, neber shall forget de leetle chile dat used to play with you."

Here the old servant hid her face in her hands, and her voice was choked with emotion.

"You mean your daughter !" exclaimed Isabella Castellos with a responsive quiver in her voice. "You want her free, too. O ! tell me how I can help you, and I will do anything I can."

"Your fadder gib her to ole Philip Grandaville, so dat now she'se Ruy Grandaville's slave," resumed the old woman in answer to this assurance. "But if ole Massa, your fadder, war, in de same deed dat sets me free, to say dat he gibs me de title to my own chile dat I might set her free, too, Massa Ruy, 'specially, if he'se gwine to marry you, couldn't 'fuse to 'firm de 'veyance. Does you'se see de pint ?"

"I catch your idea fully," replied Isabella, "and I heartily approve of it. I will have my father, in the instrument of manumission which liberates you, insert the clause you desire concerning your daughter, and should I become Ruy Grandaville's wife, I promise you that all my influence shall be given to have him confirm it."

"Heaben bless you," exclaimed the old servant passionately, "fur all your goodness to an ole slave-woman dat can neber tank you half 'nough ! Dey 'prived me ob one daughter, but dey shant neber rob me ob de oder."

And with that Esther threw her arms about her young

mistress' neck, and folded her in a close embrace. Nor was the emotion all on her side. The warm heart of Isabella melted fully and at once. Long did they continue locked in each other's arms, their souls stirred with an affection as honest as if they had been mother and child.

CHAPTER IV.

CONTINUING THE THREAD.

“**B**ONEY, has any of those confounded duns been after me to-day? They have, you say. How many? One, two, three, Satan take them! But Boney, we'll soon be rid of them. Matters are so arranged at last, that we are masters of the situation. There'll be plenty of money before long, and then for life in earnest. But now to business. I must write that letter, and so fix matters. Bring me pen, ink and paper, gilt-edged, recollect. Now let there be no interruption.”

Availing ourselves of our joint privilege of story-teller and story-reader, if we look over the shoulder of the man to whose voice we have just been listening, we will find him busy with the preparation of the following epistle:

“BACHELOR'S QUARTERS,—, 18—.

“DEAREST ISABELLA:

“Yours of yesterday was duly received, and its contents considered with the attention to which any communication from you is entitled.

“In reply, I have to say, that the condition you mention offers, in my judgment, no obstruction to our union.

“I am, at the same time, free to admit that I do not share your peculiar views on the subject of owning and holding slaves. I am a pro-slavery man, sincerely believing that the most favorable condition in which the negro can be placed is under the protection of a kind and faithful master. As an owner of slaves myself, I have always regarded it as my highest duty to provide for their happiness and moral training.

" You look at the matter in a different light. Well, perhaps you are right. Woman's impulses are, possibly, safer than man's judgment. I respect, nay admire, the spirit which prompts such benevolence. If you do err, it is on the side to which your good and loving heart inclines you.

" But, apart from all question of right and wrong, I feel bound to respect your preference in this matter for another reason. The property is your own, and your pleasure must govern in its disposition. I feel that I have no right to interfere, except to aid in the execution of your wishes, which you will always find me ready to do.

" As an earnest of my desire to serve you, I will here mention that I have this day engaged the services of the eminent attorney, Seabry Anthony, Esq., whose reputation is a sufficient guaranty of his fidelity, to prepare for my execution such a legal instrument as will, upon our marriage, secure you in the sole control and disposition of your slaves. As soon as it is completed, I will see that it is submitted for your examination and approval.

" And now, dearest Isabella, the one matter, which might have proved an impediment to our union, under other and less favorable circumstances, being happily disposed of, let us lose no time unnecessarily in sealing our happiness. Although, from a life-long association, my manner may at times have appeared cold and undemonstrative, believe me, when I assure you, that I have always lived in the hope of claiming you for my wife. I rejoice that I am now given the opportunity of rendering another proof of my devotion.

" I should call upon you this evening, dearest, to receive from your own sweet lips the plaudit which I know your heart is ready to bestow, did not a pressing duty call me elsewhere. The bed-side of an afflicted friend requires my presence; but the consciousness of your approbation will cheer me in the discharge of the work I owe to friendship and humanity.

" With this explanation of what may seem like neglect, I shall hope to see you soon to arrange any preliminaries necessary to our marriage. Your father, I am aware, is

anxious that the long-deferred arrangement first suggested by our parents shall be speedily concluded, and I trust that your own heart will second his zeal. Nevertheless, your pleasure in this, as in all else, shall be supreme with

Ever yours,

"Ruy."

"Brandy, Boney ! Some brandy, quick ! After that job I need something to brace me up," exclaimed Ruy Grandaville, as he threw his pen aside, and leaned back in his chair.

"O, the falsehood there is in the thing," he continued, speaking to his old servant and himself at the same time, "but it can't be helped. I'm in the stream, and can do nothing but go with the current. If Niagara comes in the way, I must take the leap. Money I must have, and so I'll take the chances of matrimony.

"Here's to the sweetest woman in Christendom ! Boney, she's to be your mistress. A curse on the weakness that brings another face before my eyes ! It has no business here. The matter is fixed.

"Boney, I have an engagement with Colonel Masters to-night. He's the sick man, ha ! ha ! ha ! It will be a stiff game. He got decidedly the best of it the last time. I will not be back 'til morning. Have a bath and some breakfast ready ; for I shall have some important business to attend to. 'Tis to meet your future mistress, Boney, and make arrangements to surrender my bachelor freedom. But, when the sacrifice is made, there'll be plenty of money, Boney, and plenty of time to take revenge on cruel Fate. Fill that glass once more ! "

"He has a noble heart after all, mamma. Where now are your suspicions of his disinterestedness ? And see how candid he is, too. He admits that he is in favor of slavery, and yet he is ready to aid me in carrying out

my views of freeing my people. Father is right about Ruy. There is something in blood after all."

Such were Isabella Castellos' comments, upon reading Ruy Grandaville's letter, to Aunt Esther. Whatever her private opinion, that old lady had nothing to urge in opposition.

"Well, I suppose that settles the matter," continued the young lady. "Really I don't know whether I'm sorry or glad, although I suppose I ought to feel very happy."

And in confirmation of her last remark, Isabella heaved a long sigh.

In due time came the document prepared by Seabry Anthony, the lawyer. It was a most formidable paper, very voluminous, full of legal terms, and had at the end of it several great broad seals, opposite to one of which appeared the name of Ruy Grandaville, where it had plainly been written by his own hand.

The document purported to bestow upon Isabella the authority, after her marriage with Grandaville, to do with her slaves as she might see fit ; and she put it carefully away, congratulating herself that the freedom of her people was secure beyond all contingency. The lawyer had pointed out to Ruy at least half-a-dozen defects in the instrument, any one of which, he said, would prove fatal.

So the time for the wedding was agreed upon, and Aunt Esther allowed no one to surpass her in the apparent zeal with which she labored in the work of preparation.

CHAPTER V.

THE TWO ISABELLAS MEET.

HE marriage did not take place at the appointed time. Isabella Castellos was then in bed, languishing with a slow fever brought on by alarm and excitement at the time of the riot. She had escaped without bodily injury, but her agitation had been too great for a nervous organization never strong. She, however, did not appear to be the greatest sufferer. Her afflictions were borne so patiently that even Aunt Esther was unconscious of their full extent, and, perhaps, that faithful servant and nurse experienced greater anxiety from a knowledge of that fact. Ruy Grandaville was keenly irritated by the interruption in his plans, although to Isabella herself and her father he showed no other feeling than solicitude for her health. Annoyed by duns, constantly increasing in number and importunity, he manifested his vexation by longer sittings with Colonel Masters and similar associates, and by keeping Napoleon Bonaparte, when in his own apartment, in a state of constant apprehension with threats of selling him to the Yankee Hawks.

But of all the parties concerned, no one was so much disturbed as Ferdinand Castellos. Affection and anxiety for his daughter were, beyond question, partly the cause of his discomfort ; but disappointment in his expectations afflicted him far more. He fretted continually and openly. He complained bitterly of the worry which the delay in

the wedding was occasioning him. He had hoped to have the matter off his mind.

Isabella's sickness was quite as much of the spirit as of the body. To Aunt Esther, who had always been a confidant in her troubles, she freely admitted her tortures inspired by the remembrance of Brown, and her supposed responsibility for his fate, the more keenly regretted because not realized until the evil was done.

"You did not know him, mamma," she said one day, "nor did I, until that terrible calamity came upon us. I never dreamt of the nobility that was in his soul, until that fearful hour. O, that my life could be given for his! Too late! Too late!"

How often the image of her late co-laborer recurred to her thoughts, as she lingered from day to day in the prostration of disease, and what were the secret meditations of her soul, she alone was fully conscious. It was certain that her countenance took on a mournfulness of expression beyond what sickness would ordinarily occasion, and the heart of her old nurse, who had her own private impression of the cause, bled accordingly.

"Mamma," began Isabella, one day, when sufficiently recovered to sit up in her bed supported by pillows, "was there no account published of that terrible affair, giving the particulars of his fate, and showing the disposition made of what remained of him?"

Esther understood well enough to whom she referred.

"Yes, chile, the papers tolle all 'bout it, but you'se should not 'cite yourself with such tings now. Wait 'till you'se stronger."

"I shall not wait," replied Isabella with a petulance wholly unusual to her. "I'm strong now."

Esther interposed no further opposition, but rising, proceeded to take from a receptacle where it appeared

to have been carefully deposited, a journal containing a full account of the mob. Without comment, she handed it to her young mistress.

Hastily did Isabella run her eye over the report of the public meeting preliminary to the riot, her hand shaking a little, and her brow growing deathly pale, as she came to the account of Ruy Grandaville's share in that portion of the proceedings ; but she said nothing to indicate her agitation. Silently she continued to read, and pretty soon the pallor on her face was succeeded by an unusual flush, and her eye fairly sparkled with excitement, as she came to a statement of the protracted and heroic resistance which Charles Brown had made to the mob. It was plain to be seen, from her rapid breathing and her animated countenance, for which party her sympathies were enlisted. Then suddenly she gave a scream ; the paper dropped from her hand ; and she fell back upon the pillows.

“Ruy, his murderer !” was all she said.

Aunt Esther ran to her as quickly as she could, and supported her in her arms. Her mind appeared to be wandering. She imagined herself back in the school-room of the old Triangle Building, and was striving to restrain the mob from inflicting violence upon some one. Suddenly she seemed to recognize a familiar countenance. “O, spare him, Ruy !” she piteously exclaimed. “He will not injure you. He is kind and gentle and good.” Then she screamed out in her agony, and began to talk incoherently, as if she saw some one bleeding and dying in her presence. It was not long that the struggle continued. Her strength was not equal to the strain. Unconsciousness succeeded, accompanied with an almost total suspension of the bodily functions, and it was long before a reaction could be obtained.

A relapse was the consequence, followed by fever and greater prostration than ever.

When the disease again took a favorable turn, Isabella was perfectly calm, and made no reference to the incident which had so disturbed her, or its cause. Esther hoped that the circumstance had entirely passed from her recollection. She was, however, surprised and perplexed not long afterwards by another singular request from the sick girl, which was insisted upon with all the authority of an invalid.

"Mamma," she began, "I should like to see my old playmate and namesake, whom I can just make out among the recollections of my childhood."

"Gracious me! I tought you'd forgot all 'bout de gal; you war such a leetle ting when dey sent her 'way."

"I fear I have been remiss in my duty, if, for no other reason, on her mother's account, in not hunting her up before this."

"Bless you, chile, dar's nobody got a heart like youself; but my gal's growed so changed, you'se wouldn't know her nohow."

"Leave that to me. I insist upon your bringing her here the first opportunity you have. I do so want to see her. You will not fail, will you, mamma?"

"No, chile; I'll see 'bout it."

A day or two subsequent to the above conversation, Esther having upon some pretext left the room, Isabella was surprised by the unannounced entrance of a tall and graceful female, whose appearance was that of an entire stranger. While there was much that was attractive in her look and bearing, her countenance had an expression so worn and depressed as plainly to tell of recent and severe suffering of body or mind. Her manner was lady-like, even diffident, notwithstanding the singularity of her intrusion.

The two women looked at each other in unbroken silence, their eyes busy with the work of examination. Isabella Castellos was the first to speak. Her countenance suddenly lighting up with equal intelligence and pleasure, she exclaimed :

“It is. I remember everything. Isabella, my early companion !”

Scarcely were the words spoken, before the two women were in each other’s arms.

The reader could have no desire to be present at the interview that followed. It was full of tears and sad disclosures. At her foster-sister’s request, the slave-woman detailed the leading incidents of her sorrowfully eventful life ; her surprise at learning the story of her birth ; her acquaintance and intimacy with her young master ; her bitter trial in the death of her child ; the suddenly awakened dream of freedom and an honest love ; and its utter extinguishment in the death of her lover by the hand of her master.

“And your master’s name is ——”

“Ruy Grandaville.”

The utter sinking of the heart with which Isabella Castellos received the confirmation of her worst fear, deprived her of all power of exclamation. She remained like one benumbed, in whom life has not been destroyed but frozen. There was no altered expression of the countenance to betray the severity of the shock. She was simply, for the time, left without sensation. Her companion did not even suspect that she had any other feeling than pity, and oppressed with her own unhappiness, was grateful for the silence that ensued.

When Isabella Castellos, through a powerful effort of the will, recovered the power of deliberation, she rejoiced that she had given no sign of the blow she had received,

saying to herself that her companion was already suffering enough, without suspecting that her words had brought such agony to another. She even undertook the part of comforter, and administered such consolation as the goodness of her heart at the moment suggested. With many assurances of continuing affection, the two Isabellas then separated.

Aunt Esther did not return to the sick room until some time after the visitor had left. Isabella Castellos was anxiously, even nervously, awaiting her.

"O, mamma," she began, almost as soon as the old nurse had appeared, "there is a question I do so much wish to ask you, but I'm afraid you would not like it."

"No, chile, dar'se nuffin you'se can ax dat I'll not like to answer."

"Perhaps I ought not to inquire, but is—is not Isabella—your Isabella—my sister?"

There was no immediate reply, and, after a moment's delay, the speaker went on :

"I noticed something in her countenance, when she first appeared, which so reminded me of my father. All the time we were talking, I could not help recalling my father in her every look and word. You will pardon me, I know, if I have done wrong."

"O, chile! you'se hab guessed it; you'se hab guessed it. Bella an' you'se is, indeed, children ob de same fadder. My chile war born a leetle de fust; oderwise, when you'se war babies, you'se might hab passed fur twins."

"An' now you'se understand," resumed Esther, after a pause in which both women had been engaged with their own thoughts, "why I'se been so 'sistent 'gainst you'se marryin' Ruy Grandaville. Dat man's already 'stroyed de happiness ob one ob my children; an' O, Bella! when you'se does seem so much like my own flesh an'

blood, can you'se wonder dat I'se don't want him to hab de oder?"

"O, mamma, you are so good! How can I ever repay you for your love and watchfulness? You mean well, but it is too late; too late. I must marry Ruy Grandaville."

"Must marry! What does you'se mean, chile?"

"I mean that it is clearly a duty to those I love to do so. Ruy Grandaville, I admit, is not the person I should select for my husband, were I choosing for myself; but, alas! I am only one of many parties concerned. My father——"

"Your fadder wouldn't certainly 'sist, if he'se know'd all. He'se lubs you'se dearly. Why doesn't you'se go strait an' tell him he'se gwine to break you're heart?"

"My father loves me dearly, devotedly; but his views are very different from mine. In his eyes Ruy Grandaville is an honorable man, and it would be vain to attempt to persuade him otherwise. His faith in blood is unbounded. It has become with him a philosophy almost as steadfast as his religion, and Ruy Grandaville's father was his trusted friend. He measures Ruy by his father's example. If he were even told all we know, it would not greatly shake his belief. He has been reared in the midst of slavery, and looks with a tolerant eye upon its vices. He would call Ruy's conduct, in heading the mob that murdered my poor, dead friend, chivalrous. And as for his dealings with your daughter, how can we expect one to sit in judgment, who took the same advantage of his position with the mother? No, no; an appeal to my father would be vain. He has set his heart upon this marriage. It has been with him a cherished scheme for years. He is now an old man, feeble both in body and mind, and I do believe that to break off the arrangement

and defeat the provision he has so long contemplated for the family honor and my happiness, as he regards it, would kill him. I cannot think of such a thing."

"Chile, you'se is a bery angel."

"Then, there are my own people," continued Isabella. "By marrying Ruy Grandaville, I secure their freedom at once, which, in case I should die before the age at which I am authorized to act alone in their behalf, might never come. Ruy's disinterestedness in their case goes very far to compensate for all else that he may have done."

"Dat's a fac'."

"And lastly, there are two other parties deeply interested in my marriage with Ruy Grandaville. They are yourself, mamma, and my sister. You know you wanted freedom papers for yourself and your daughter. I have arranged to obtain such a document as you wish from my father, but as Ruy Grandaville is the legal owner of your daughter, it can only show his desire that she should be made free. As Ruy's wife, I can insist upon his compliance with my father's wish ; but otherwise, as Isabella is his own absolute property, I have no right, no claim, to ask her liberation at his hands."

"Do you know, mamma, what I have been thinking of," continued the speaker, "since I have met my sister ? Here, where slavery prevails, you and your daughter can never be respected, even if you were free. The prejudice against color is so intense that nothing can withstand it. But away up North there are places where there never was any slavery, and where that prejudice cannot be so strong. There you and Isabella could live respected and happy. I have been thinking that, as soon as you are both free, I can secure you a home there, and you and my dear sister, in your new life can soon forget

all the sorrowful past. Now, do you think the sacrifice on my part will be too great?"

"Bless you! bless you, chile! you'se is too good! too good! You'se willin' to gib far more dan we'se hab any right to ax. No, chile, no; it can't be on our 'count, nohow! I'se an ole woman now, an' while I can stay with you, I'se don't want my freedom. An' as for Bella, she'se suffered 'bout all de wrong Massa Ruy can 'flict. Why should de remnant ob my ole days, or de balance ob Bella's broken, widdered life, from which all de verdure's clean gone, be made de 'cuse fur de sacrifice ob you'se fresh young heart? O, chile, its axin' too much! too much!"

The tears with which this disclaimer was accompanied, gave conclusive proof of the old woman's sincerity. Isabella was profoundly touched, and in the beneficence of her nature hastened to administer such consolation as was within her reach.

"But mamma, you have not heard all of my argument. The sacrifice is not one thousandth part as great as you suppose. It is true that, after all I have learned, I cannot even respect Ruy Grandaville; but that is not the only reason why I cannot give him my heart. I have no heart to give. It would be a crime for me to marry any one worthy to be loved. My heart is buried. Its in the grave with the only man I ever met who, I now know, deserved it wholly, and to whom it could have been wholly given. I never knew it until here, within the quiet of my sick-chamber, I had nothing to do but to think. Lying here, with all the events of the last few weeks crowding upon my mind, the noble qualities of that brave man who laid down his life in the cause of the lowly and oppressed, sharing with me, alas! to his own undoing, a labor of love, came before me in such bright

array, that suddenly it burst upon me that I loved him, and loved him with an affection that can come but once. I could not realize that he was dead. It seemed that we were both alive, and that our hearts were in communication. I thought I heard his voice, telling a tale of surpassing sweetness, and pleading for the return of an overwhelming passion. I know that my impressions were, in part, the fancies of a disturbed imagination, generated by a diseased body, but the effect upon my spirit has been unmistakably real. It may be folly for me to surrender to such a feeling, for I knew nothing of his feelings towards me. When he was alive, he never spoke of love, and now he is gone; but the sentiment which his memory has awakened is such that I can never, never love another."

"An' if dat poor dead man, dat Massa Brown you'se speakin' ob, war livin' now, an' war to tell you what he tought, fur I'se 'spect his labors fur de cullud people war as much 'count ob de teacher as de scholars, would you'se 'sent den to drop Massa Ruy fur de abolitioner?"

"Hush mamma! How can you ask such a question? He is dead, and to speak of such a thing only gives rise to fancies that leave a deeper gloom behind them."

"Forgib me chile! I'se wrong an' you'se right; you'se allers is. But dar, dat's talk 'nough now. You'se not strong yit. Better be quiet an' sleep."

Soon the sick girl, overtaxed with exertion and excitement, slept peacefully. The old servant continued to gaze upon her long after slumber had closed her eyes and deadened her senses. Her look showed that an internal conflict was going on. At one moment the expression was full of the sweetest affection, and then a dark, vengeful frown would settle upon her countenance. At

last, rising and standing over the pale and exhausted sleeper, she muttered half audibly :

“ Dar’se no help fur it ; it must be done.”

What it was that, to the mind of the old slave woman, was unavoidable, and which necessitated some decisive action, the reader will learn as the story unravels ; but now it is proper that we should turn to the movements of other actors in these scenes.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SWAMP-SQUATTER'S HOME AGAIN.

UIET reigned in the cabin of the swamp-squatter for some time after the incidents described in the chapter which last introduced the reader to that unhappy domicile. Walker had said nothing further to excite the suspicions of the woman at the head of his household, and he, in his own mind, was entirely satisfied that the rough treatment he had administered, had wholly exorcised the spirit of rebellion on that occasion displayed. Confidence, however, on neither side, was fully restored. The mother narrowly watched her master's movements, full of apprehension on account of her eldest and favorite child. Nor was she without ground for disquietude. Walker had, on more than one occasion of late, brushed his hair and paid some attention to his personal appearance, before absenting himself from his home. A proceeding so unusual she believed could not be without a hidden meaning, and she did not fail to draw the most unfavorable conclusion.

On one of those occasions the squatter did not return to his cabin at the usual time. He was absent all night and part of the next day. When he did return, he was accompanied by a tall, dandyish man who, although a stranger to Walker's household, was no other than Hawks, the Yankee negro trader.

Having seated the visitor as comfortably as possible in the main apartment of his house, the master bade the

"old gal" get them something to eat, at the same time roughly intimating that she should cease her staring at the stranger.

"Take sumthin' ter brace yer after yer journey?" said the host to the new-comer.

"Don't care if I does," replied the latter.

"Lou, yer gaping nigger, git that jug ov whiskey from under the bed, an' be quick about it," directed the squatter.

The whiskey depository was duly produced.

"Now the cup," added the master.

The article last referred to happened to be on a high shelf, which compelled the girl to stand on tip-toe to reach it. Having got it into her possession, she stood apparently undecided what to do with it.

"Why don't yer pour some fur the gentleman? Hasn't yer got no manners nor gumption?" exclaimed Walker.

Thus prompted, the girl poured out a cupful of the liquor, and timidly presented it to the Yankee.

He took it from her hand, but instead of raising it to his lips, sat insolently studying the shrinking young creature before him, inspecting her face, her hands, her feet, and her whole form with perfect composure. The examination having been continued to his satisfaction, he raised the cup to his lips, and disposing of the contents at a draught, handed it back to the waiting girl.

That done, Lou was ordered to get her father's pipe; then to bring a cup of water for the stranger; and in that way, with one direction after another, she was kept constantly employed in the presence of the two men until dinner was ready, when she was required to wait upon her master and his guest at the table.

Her mother, during all this time, although forbidden to stare at the stranger, was by no means unobservant.

By means of stolen glances, she pretty closely observed the Yankee, discovering that his eyes continually followed the girl in all her movements ; and more than once she detected glances of intelligence passing between him and her master.

When the repast was finished, Hawks and Walker left the house, taking seats under a tree near by, for greater coolness, as was remarked ; but in such a position that no one could leave the cabin without passing under their observation.

"A likely article that, I tell yer," began the squatter by way of opening the conversation, indulging at the same time in a good-natured chuckle. "'Spect yer don't often come across sich in yer dealin'."

"Perty fair," replied the Yankee with an air of indifference. "Perty fair, but she doesn't 'pear strong."

"But," replied Walker, with a perceptible fall of the countenance, "consider the looks and the blood."

"The looks is all well enough," rejoined Hawks, "but there's two sides to the blood question. While the whiter shades does fetch a leetle the highest figger in the market, the risk ov the thing is far greater. The devil seems to be in white blood, when it gits mixed with the nigger. The yaller ones I've allers found worse to conquer and harder to hold than the real charcoal. They're more inclined to run off, and more difficult to catch when they does run. There's more grit in them sort, too. I had one on 'em once, jist about the stripe ov that gal ov yourn, who, when she found I wasn't goin' to 'low no foolin', jist went an' drowned herself out ov pure spite, involvin' the loss ov a clean thousan' dollars. There's a mighty sight ov cunnin' in 'em, an' you never knows whether you've got a fortin' or nothin' at all. I doesn't want to say nothin' agin the blood, seein' that, probably,

there's some ov your own with it, but to my notion, it doesn't add much to the value of the property."

"Well," said Walker, more and more disheartened by his companion's talk, "what will yer give fur her, anyhow?"

"What'll you take?" was the Yankee's characteristic reply.

It is unnecessary to follow the negotiation through its various stages; suffice it to say that, after a great deal of dicker, a bargain was concluded, whereby Lou was to become the Yankee's property for seven hundred and fifty dollars.

The trade completed, the Yankee arose, and putting his hands to his lips, sent forth a sharp and peculiar whistle, in response to which, coming out of the dense forest where they must have been in waiting, two mounted men appeared, each leading an extra horse. When the strangers had come up, Hawks took out a piece of paper partly covered with printed matter, and a pen and pocket ink-stand. Having filled up certain blanks in the printed instrument, he handed paper and pen to Walker, blurting out as he did so:

"Here, old feller, put your fist to this here document. Its the bill ov sale that you've to sign."

The squatter merely looked at the paper in an irresolute sort of way.

"O, I see how it is," observed Hawks. "Your education doesn't embrace writin'. School houses, I reckon, wusn't plenty where you wus brought up. No difference, your cross will do all the same."

The squatter having attached a mark to his written name, and the new-comers having duly witnessed the instrument, Hawks coolly folded it up and put it in his pocket. Then, taking out his pocket-book, he delib-

erately counted out seven hundred and fifty dollars in bank notes. Walker, who had been watching the process with hungry eyes, eagerly held out his hand for the money.

"Not yit, old feller," said the Yankee, twisting the bills into a roll and slipping them into his pocket. "That's not the way I does business. The money goes when the property comes. Dealin' in niggers' a risky thing. You never know they're yours until you have 'em. Bring on the gal, an' you shall have the money."

The four men thereupon entered the cabin.

There sat the mother with a quiet look of unconcern upon her face, but the daughter was nowhere to be seen. In vain was the woman asked concerning the missing girl. She sat in dogged silence, wholly refusing to open her lips. Equally unavailing was the search that was instituted. Lou was nowhere to be found about the premises.

"Didn't I tell you," said the Yankee, "that them's the slipperiest kind. There izzn't much about a nigger that I don't know; I've handled so many ov 'em."

"What's ter be done?" asked Walker, thoroughly nonplussed, and turning appealingly to Hawks.

"What's to be done?" repeated the Yankee somewhat pompously. "Either we've got to give up the game, or make that old 'un tell where the young 'un's hid. She knows the spot, and its not fur off neither."

"But how's she ter be made tell?" asked Walker.

"How is she to be made tell?" replied Hawks. "In one ov two ways. We've either got to flog it out ov her, or make her cry murder till the young 'un hears her yellin', an' then she'll come out ov her hole quick enough. She's not agoin' to lie low and lit the old 'un be whipped to death on her account. That you ken depend on. There's a mighty sight ov feelin' among them sort ov

critters ; more, I've sometimes thought, than among their betters. What do you say ? ”

“ Go ahead,” growled Walker.

Threats proving useless to wrest the secret from the mother, preparations were made to employ force. The woman’s back was bared to the waist, and one of Hawks’ assistants, whose eyes fairly gloated at the prospect before him, took his station, whip in hand.

“ Whish ” came the first cut of the lash, and a straight white line appeared on the bare flesh from shoulder to shoulder. But sharp as the pain must have been, the woman merely grinned a bitter smile, and pressed her teeth more firmly together. Then came another blow, and another, and another ; and so they continued to fall until the blood trickled down the flayed flesh, and the strong man plying the scourge, suspended his work from sheer exhaustion. But while the smile upon the victim’s face had given way to an expression of intense agony, not a sound had issued from her lips.

“ Waal, that’s grit, anyhow,” said the Yankee, “ but there’s another trick that’ll bring it out, if anything will.”

With that, Hawks took the lash of the whip that had been in use, tied it so as to form a small loop, and having first put the whip-handle through it, slipped it over the woman’s thumb.

“ Now,” said he to his assistant, “ give it a twist, but go slow.”

The man commenced slowly to turn the stick, bringing a constantly increasing pressure upon the thumb. The pain must have been excruciating. The blood, forced out from below the nail, fell off, drop after drop. But still the woman, though sinking down upon the floor from weakness caused by pain and loss of blood, did not even utter a groan. Her face, at one moment, was fiery

red ; the next deathly pale. A bloody foam began to ooze from her lips.

"Stop," suddenly exclaimed the Yankee. "Blast me, if she izzn't fainted—or dead."

It was true. The poor creature had become insensible, and lay without sign of life or feeling.

"Its no use," said Hawks. "She's the devil hisself, or his daughter."

"Don't yer be uneasy," he added, as Walker showed some concern, not for the woman's sake, but at the prospect of losing a valuable piece of property. "She's not gone yit. I've seen dozens ov 'em brought to that afore. Them sort stand a sight ov killin' afore they peg out. But that does'nt bring the gal. There's jist one chance left."

"What's that?" asked Walker eagerly.

"Jist wait a bit, an' I'll show ye."

With that the Yankee put his hands over his mouth, and began to imitate the sounds likely to be made by a person in distress. First came groans and feeble cries, followed by shrieks and prayers, as of one undergoing some terrible punishment ; but delivered in tones so shrill and womanish, that any one not seeing the author would have believed them to come from female lips.

"What d'youthink ov that?" he asked, as he paused for breath.

"Wonderful," replied Walker.

"You see," said Hawks, "I've been so long among niggers, an' heard so much ov their cryin' and pleadin', mothers fur their children, and children fur their mothers, that the thing now almost comes nateral to me. Its got to be a sort ov second language. But now, you fellers, listen sharp when I try it on agin. I'm agoin' to give an extra touch."

Sure enough, with that the Yankee commenced screaming and wailing once more, imitating the female voice in a most surprising manner. Having gone through a succession of shrieks, he suddenly cried out :

"Come, come, Lou! Save me, chile, save me! O, I'm dying! Fur de Lor' sake, come quick!"

Then followed a scream so loud and piercing that it really seemed like an expiring effort, and all was still.

At once all ears were strained to catch any responsive sound.

They were not to listen in vain.

"Mother! mother!" came a wailing voice, but so faint as to be barely distinguishable.

"That's the gal," said Walker, exultingly. "We'll have her now."

But the victim of deceit was not to be secured so easily. Distinct as the voice was, all were at a loss to tell from whence it proceeded. It seemed to issue from the ground at their feet. As an inspection had already been made beneath the floor of the cabin, the four men looked in each other's faces with a stare of blank perplexity. Hawks was the first to suggest a solution of the mystery.

"Sounds," said he, "as if that voice might come from a well or cistern."

The idea was at once acted on.

Outside the cabin, but almost beneath an opening in the wall that answered for a window, was a well which supplied Walker's household with water for cooking and drinking.

Down in that dark cavity, as the men bent over the curb surrounding it, just above the water's surface, was seen the pale face of her they were seeking, looking up with a sad, pleading expression. When Hawks and her

father had been discussing her purchase outside of the house, she had easily passed out of the window, which was on the farther side of the building from where they were sitting, and had descended into the well, which happened not to contain water enough to cover her without her stooping, and where she would have been secure from detection but for her own betrayal.

She was soon drawn up from her hiding-place, when, springing from her captors, she rushed into the house, and threw herself, with a piteous cry, upon the prostrate form of her mother, just then returning to consciousness.

"O, chile, chile, dis am wuss dan death!" exclaimed the poor woman, when sufficiently recovered to understand the situation. "Why didn't you'se drown yourself, as I'se told you'se to, rather dan lit dem take you? O, why didn't you'se drown yourself? Why didn't you'se drown yourself?"

It was all the half-crazed wretch could say, and she went on feebly repeating the question over and over.

But why dwell upon the scene? The picture is one which has had many an illustration, as dark or darker, in the daily practical life of the slave-holding system.

Walker got his money—the price of his own flesh and blood—and the negro trader, secretly exulting in his bargain, got his property. The girl was dragged from her mother, placed upon one of the animals that had been brought for the purpose, and carried away to a life neither worse nor better than the one which thousands on thousands of her sisters of a hapless race have been compelled to lead. As for her mother, she had left the highest consolation which any one in her situation ever had—she could die.

Here, and the reader will not regret the fact, we bid a final adieu to the swamp-squatter and his home.

CHAPTER VII.

DR. CLAY AND HIS PATIENT.

HE progress of my story now requires our return once more to the neighborhood of the old Triangle Building—not to enter, for although several weeks had passed since the riot, that venerable structure remained a ragged and tenantless wreck. Not one of its former occupants had returned, partly prevented by fear of further violence, and partly by a superstitious dread of a place so vividly associated with scenes of blood and murder. It stood desolate and repulsive. A curse seemed to be upon it.

Passing by that silent and empty structure, we would have found ourselves in a narrow street which was evidently the quarter of a numerous population. There was little evidence of wealth to be seen, and none of luxury. The first floors of houses which were rarely over two stories high, were mostly occupied with shops of unpretending character, while the upper rooms were used as dwellings by the proprietors and their families. It was a street inhabited almost exclusively by free persons of color.

Passing, at the time of which I am now writing, by a certain building in the street referred to, and externally among the most respectable it contained, at any hour between midnight and morning, we would have been led to suppose that every one belonging to it was buried in profound repose. It appeared perfectly dark and quiet. Had we, however, attempted in the body to enter it, we

should have been met by a watchful sentinel stationed upon the only stairway leading to the upper rooms from the street, who would have stoutly disputed our passage. But by availing ourselves of the incorporealism with which both writer and reader in cases like this are endowed, and passing the warden unseen, we might have made our way to a good-sized room on the upper floor where, even at that hour, we should have found several persons, not merely awake, but manifesting a deep solicitude about something in their midst. The party consisted of three men and one woman. When they addressed each other it was in whispers, and all their movements betokened extreme wariness. Looking about for an explanation of such unusual watchfulness and caution, we would have found it in the indications of a sick chamber. On a small table were to be seen a number of vials and apothecaries' preparations, while the atmosphere of the room was oppressive with the odors of drugs and medicines. But more conclusive still was an object stretched upon a bed in the centre of the apartment, nearly hidden by the cover of a snowy sheet. A closer inspection would have revealed that object to be a man, although the first impression obtained in the dim light that filled the chamber would have been that it was no longer a living being. The face, which was that of a white man, besides being nearly concealed by patches and bandages, was pale, haggard and death-like, and the body lay perfectly passive.

One of the men already spoken of, at the time we are supposed to enter the room, was bending over the bed, with his ear near to the object referred to, while his companions appeared to be anxiously awaiting his decision. They were all colored persons, or at least had colored blood in their veins.

"Tank de Lor' he sleeps! De crisis is past," said the man, rising from his stooping posture, and speaking in a whisper just loud enough for the others to hear, at the same time enjoining silence by a motion of the hand. A sigh of relief was the only response.

"Now let's all 'tire," continued the speaker, who evidently exercised a considerable authority over the others, "'cept Esther. She had better stay 'til he wakes. He'll be rational den, if tings go as I'se 'spect. He'se been a-callin' on his mudder, which shows dat he'se got a mudder somewhar, an' Esther habs de mudderly look. It am bery 'portant dat de fust 'pression he gets, be'se one dat's pleasant an' soothin'. He'se too weak fur much 'citemental now."

The words of the speaker were obeyed without a question by his companions. All left the room except the female called Esther, and whom the reader will readily recognize as the Aunt Esther who appears in several of the preceding chapters. She took her seat by the side of the bed, and as the quiet hours wore on, attentively kept watch over the object that was lying so passively there.

But while that silent watch continues, it may be as well to satisfy the reader's curiosity concerning the person who appeared to give direction to all movements in that dimly-lighted and closely-guarded chamber.

He was a person well known in New Orleans at the time of which I am writing, where he went by the name of Doctor Clay. Although a mulatto, he was a man of some attainments, and was reputed to possess more than ordinary skill in some branches of the profession that gave him his title. His career had been a singular one. Born a slave, he had, for several years prior to the date of his introduction to the reader of these pages, enjoyed

quite an extensive practice as a physician. Fortune had stood his friend by making him, while a boy, the property of a gentleman who, besides being a distinguished practitioner of medicine, was a man of just and liberal views. Taken into his master's office in the capacity of an errand boy, he speedily displayed considerable aptitude for the business of his owner. Hence he came in time to be entrusted with the preparation of drugs, and in some instances was allowed to fill some of the more simple prescriptions. But the slave progressed even faster than his master gave him credit for. Being present at consultations, and when important surgical operations were performed, in some of which his services were required, he suffered no act or word to pass unobserved ; while, having managed to acquire a knowledge of reading, he gathered from his master's library a store of information which no one suspected him to possess. The opportunity for its practical application came in due season.

A colored man who had met with a painful and dangerous bodily injury, was one day brought into the office of Clay's master during the physician's absence. The sufferings of the wounded man were intense, and his case, to all appearances, was one demanding immediate attention ; but Clay did not at the time know where his master was, nor when his return might be looked for. Hastily examining the case, he conceived the idea that he understood the treatment required, and, moved with compassion for the sufferer, he seized his master's instruments, and proceeded to perform a really difficult, but successful, operation. When the physician returned, he found the wounded man quite comfortable, and everything indicating a satisfactory termination of the case. He immediately inquired by whom the operation had been performed, supposing one of his professional breth-

ren had opportunely been at hand. Clay was standing by, and at once began to tremble, anticipating summary punishment when it was discovered what he had presumed to do. His master would have found it difficult to credit the information he received from others who were present, had not the terrified expression of the slave's countenance confirmed what he heard. Then, upon instituting an inquiry, he learned the extent to which Clay had prosecuted his unaided studies. He was alike surprised and gratified. His benevolent heart decided him upon a course of action.

"Clay," said he, "would you like to be a doctor?"

"Yes, Massa."

"And why would you like to be a doctor?"

"Dat I'se might help de 'flicted cullud folks dat habn't got nobody like you'se, Massa, to 'sist dem when dey'se sick."

"Good for you, Clay!" said the kind-hearted physician. "I see you have the stuff in you, and the motive to bring it out. Nobody has any right to keep such a nature as that in slavery. You shall have your wish."

With that, Clay's master told him that, for a certain time, he should have every facility his office could afford to perfect himself in a knowledge of medicine; and if he made a good use of the opportunity, at the end of that time he should have his free papers.

"You are my property," said the master, "and I am not a rich man; nevertheless, I ask no return for myself for what I give you. Should my family, however, in case of my death, ever be in need of assistance, I hope you will remember, for their sake, what I have done for you."

The speaker was as good as his word; and in due time Clay went forth, having diligently profited by his master's liberality, a free man, and prepared to practice

successfully the profession to which he had given his study and his heart. Within the sphere to which his labors were devoted, he became an instrument of great good. The colored population of New Orleans had abundant reason to be grateful for services which were never denied to the humblest and poorest of their numbers. To them his time and skill were cheerfully given, although, as his reputation increased, there were not wanting white persons who gladly availed themselves of his knowledge, and members of the medical profession, holding a high position, had in certain cases been known to consult his views. He might have rapidly accumulated property, but that seemed not to be his aim. The motive which governed his life went no further than the improvement of the race with which his destiny had become identified, although that purpose did not shut out the grateful remembrance of such members of the other race as had, by their kindness, placed him under obligation. His old master had died soon after he had become successfully established in his new calling, leaving a family behind him ill prepared for the struggle they were compelled to encounter. Then it was that the former slave proved himself the devoted and useful friend, rendering assistance to widow and children which many times over repaid the price he would have commanded upon the auction block. Such was Doctor Clay.

The first rays of the morning were fighting a successful battle with the powers of night, typical of the strife that was going on within that silent chamber between health and sickness, life and death, when the object that had been reposing so quietly under the watchful guardianship of Aunt Esther, began to exhibit signs of animation. There was a slight movement of the cover, a low, sad moan as if extorted by pain, a feeble endeavor to effect a

change of position, which was a failure, and then, after a moment of stillness, faint and tremulous came the one word :

“ Mother.”

“ Here, chile, I’se with you’se,” responded the old woman, bending forward and pressing a kiss upon the brow of the speaker.

The voice was evidently strange to the sick man, and yet there was nothing to show that the effect was other than agreeable. Slowly opening his eyes, he looked up into the face of the sympathizing attendant.

“ You—you are not my mother—are you ? ”

The words came slowly, showing that the invalid’s faculties were yet in a state of considerable bewilderment.

“ No, chile, I’se not you’se nateral mudder, but I’se you’se friend ; an’ I’ll be you’se mudder, too, if you’se let me.”

The last words were accompanied with another application of the lips. The effect was manifestly soothing. A grateful smile faintly passing over the sick man’s features was his reply.

There was a lapse of a minute, during which the invalid’s eyes were closed. Then suddenly opening them, as his body gave a convulsive start, and looking up wildly in Esther’s face, he asked :

“ Where am I ? ”

“ You’se with you’se friends, safe an’ a-growin’ well.”

The reply did not seem to be sufficient. The sick man’s eyes stared still more wildly, and his face lighted up with a flush that contrasted strangely with its former pallor, as he continued to speak :

“ I remember now. They were all about me—and the pistol. It—it is——”

“ Nobody but de cullud folks dat’s here.”

The words were Dr. Clay's.

The strange voice arrested the sick man's attention, and, seemingly, at once changed the current of his thoughts. His eyes looked inquiringly into those of the speaker. The result was evidently satisfactory and assuring. A glance of confidence passed between the two men.

"How did I come here?" asked the sick man calmly.

"Not now," replied Dr. Clay. "Some oder time we'se tells you'se. You'se ben sick—had bad dreams—is weak. Dar, no more talk! Must hab quiet. When you'se stronger, we'se tells you'se all."

Again the sick man closed his eyes peacefully and gratefully, and again, suddenly rousing up, he inquired:

"And she—she, I say—is she safe?"

"She is safe," replied Aunt Esther, seeming at once to catch the meaning of the words.

"Thank God!" exclaimed the sick man, sinking back upon his pillow apparently quite exhausted. His repose, however, was not of long duration. Again rousing up, and looking anxiously in the faces of his companions, he began:

"Is she—is she——"

Then, as if changing his mind, the speaker closed his eyes with a moan. Dr. Clay was thankful for quiet even thus, and administering a soothing potion, soon had the satisfaction of seeing his patient breathing regularly in the midst of healthful slumber. He then took his departure, but before going, he laid a strict injunction upon those left in charge, that there was to be no unnecessary conversation—no excitement.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE SICK ROOM.

F course the reader has satisfied himself ere this—something which at first he would have found it difficult to do—that the sick and wounded man who is visited in the last chapter was no other than Charles Brown, generally, at the period of which I am writing, supposed to be dead and buried. How he came to be in that quiet room, in an obscure street in the city of New Orleans, instead of the more quiet chamber of the grave, was a question that Brown himself asked with an interest greater than the reader can possibly feel.

Dr. Clay had put a prohibition upon all exciting conversation in the sick room, and the doctor's direction was quoted as conclusive authority by Brown's attendants, whenever he sought enlightenment on that point. At last, however, the doctor, observing his extreme anxiety, concluded it would be better to relieve his mind, and considerately took the task upon himself. The reader shall be present at the interview.

"Ob course," began the mulatto, "you'se curious to know how you'se 'scaped from de mob dat war a-tryin' to take you'se life. I'se will tell you all, but you'se musn't 'low yourself to be 'cited 'bout de matter."

"It war arter dark, an' most ob de mob had gone, when you'se war found. Den some ob de cullud folks ventured back to de ole Triangle, an' fetched you'se 'way. De idea war to gib you'se decent burial 'fore de

white folks could find you. If dey got you'se fust, we'se knowed de doctors would hab you'se, sartin. Dat you'se war dead, no one neber seemed to doubt. You'se war all cut an' bruised, an' covered with blood from de head to de foot.

"Well, de coffin war got, an' you'se war put into it, with de 'tention ob buryin' you'se 'fore de mornin'. But 'fore de lid war screwed down, it so happen dat I'se come 'long. I'se had ben busy with the wounded folks dat dey tought thar war a hope ob savin'. Dar dey war, all a-cryin', an' takin' de last look ob de frien' ob de black man fur whom he'd laid down de precious life, when I'se entered de room. Gwine forward to look with de rest, dar war somethin' dat tole me de life war not all gone, soon as I'se set eyes on you. So, gettin' de crowd to go 'way, all 'cept some ob de more discreet, I'se 'gins to 'periment, an' sure 'nough de life war dar.

"Den de questin' war, What war to be done? If you'se war to be buried, you'se might as well be dead at once; an' if de white folks found dat you'se war libin', it would be wuss dan to be dead. Finally, it war 'cluded dat de funeral had better go on jess de same, dough, ob course, without you'se habin' anyting to do with it. 'Cordingly de coffin war closed up, with a piece of wood 'bout you'se weight in it, an' de crowd marches off to de buryin' groun'. Dar war heaby hearts, I'se tell you, in dat 'cession, an' de grave war wet with tears as genuine as if you'se had indeed ben thar; fur only three or four war in de secret.

"But de cullud folks war not de only ones dat war 'ceived. De white folks heard ob de buryin', an' nex' mornin' all de newspapers tell all 'bout it, an' de 'citemet gradually dies 'way. Dat's how you'se comes here.

"But now you'se must be bery quiet. You'se had narrow 'scape. De feber set in, an' death hab ben

a-standin' ober you'se fur eber so long. You'se safe, dough, now whar you'se is. Only a half dozen or so knows ob you'se libin', and dey'se all you'se friends. Soon as you'se able to trabel, we'll try to get you'se out ob de city, an' send you'se back to whar you'se belongs. Dar now, not a word! As de doctor, I'se commands de quiet. Dar'se no tanks due. De obligation's more on our side dan on you'se. When you'se willin' to risk life on our 'count, we'se ought to be ready to do ebertying we'se can to sabe it. But dar, dat's 'nough talk fur dis time."

"But there is one thing," replied Brown, "which I must further insist upon knowing. There was a young lady exposed to the violence of the mob as well as myself. Perhaps you may know something of her."

"O, yes, we'se all knows Miss Castellos, an' lubs her as well. De kindness she hab showed to de poor cullud folks, hab won all our hearts. She 'scaped from de mob, but I 'stands she'se ben sick since. But dar is one dat can tell you all 'bout her. Dat's Esther, who sometimes comes to see you. She'se de slave ob Miss Castellos' fadder. When you'se strong 'nough, she shall come, an' you'se can ax her ebertying."

To such terms Brown was compelled to submit, spite of his impatience. Several days of anxious longing for Aunt Esther to appear, according to the doctor's promise, passed by, leaving him in a state of the most trying suspense. At last she came.

Brown had fallen into a troubled sleep, in the course of which he was visited by a most harassing vision. He found himself, as he believed, in one of the principal churches of New Orleans, where preparations had been made for a marriage ceremony. Everything was in readiness to proceed. At one side of the altar, as it seemed to the dreamer, stood Ruy Grandaville, having upon his

countenance the same triumphantly malicious expression he recollects to have seen there with his last remembrance of the riot, and at the other side was a female dressed in bridal robes, but apparently an unwilling party to the scene. She was being dragged to the altar against her will. As she struggled to release herself, whom should she appear to be but Isabella? Brown endeavored to spring to her assistance, but found that he could not stir from where he was. Again and again did he strive to break the spell that held him fast, but in vain; until, in utter agony of spirit, he cried out with despair. At once the vision fled at the sound of his voice, and he awoke to find himself in his own sick-room.

"Chile, chile, what am de trouble? Dar'se no one here but friends."

The voice was familiar, and a glance at the speaker disclosed Aunt Esther sitting at the bedside, with a kindly, compassionate look upon her countenance.

"O, is it—is it true, that they are dragging her to that hated marriage against her will?" exclaimed Brown, little more than half awake, and raising himself upon one elbow in his eagerness.

"Who'se does you'se mean?" asked Esther, in genuine astonishment.

"Isabella."

"Why, who'se has ben tellin' you'se dat?"

"My dream."

Esther did not know what to make of it. Had the sick man been receiving information from some one of a secret which she supposed herself and Isabella Castellos to be the only possessors, or was he laboring under some hallucination produced by sickness? The latter seemed so much the more reasonable view, that she concluded to treat the matter jocularly.

"If you'se dream can tell you'se 'bout Is'bella, why should you'se be axin' me?"

"O, do not trifle with me, I pray you! If you but knew the importance of the subject to my mind, you would not think the question strange," said Brown, with a tone of seriousness which showed that he was thoroughly awake and in earnest. "That Miss Isabella was engaged to be married to Ruy Grandaville, I had from her own lips; and from the same source I learned that her affection for you is so great that you cannot possibly be ignorant of the fact, if the proposed union is repugnant to her heart."

"An' why does you'se want to know de state ob Missey Bella's heart?"

"Because I love her."

Aunt Esther was touched. She was pleased at the confidence the sick man reposed in her friendship, and flattered at his recognition of the place she held in her mistress' affections. Sympathy for the lover had likewise, perhaps, something to do with her resolution at the moment. At all events, she then and there unreservedly communicated to Brown all she knew of the origin and history of the engagement between Ruy Grandaville and Isabella Castellos, making no concealment of the true state of Isabella's feelings towards her intended husband. One thing only did she keep back from her auditor, and that was what she knew of the newly-acknowledged sentiment of her mistress towards Brown himself.

With a profound, but secret, joy, Brown learned the truth of his dream, so far as it related to Isabella's indifference towards Ruy Grandaville. He even felt thankful for the disaster of which he had been the principal victim, when he ascertained that it had caused a temporary suspension of the objectionable nuptials.

How he was to be profited by it, he scarcely stopped to consider. It was enough for the time to know that Isabella had, through what had appeared to be his misfortune, secured passing relief.

Although he gave utterance to no word indicating the new hope that had risen in his soul, his countenance betrayed enough of his secret to excite considerable misgiving in Esther's mind. Fearful that she had inadvertently awakened expectations which might never be realized, and thus lead to more serious disappointment, she hastened, in her well-meant, but somewhat inconsiderate, way, to counteract the effect she had produced. It seemed to her that the better method would be to attack, and, if possible, weaken, the foundation upon which all of Brown's speculations rested, his love for Miss Castellos.

"O, yes," said she, "you'se not alone. Eberybody lubs Missey Bella. Its easy to lub de daughter ob a rich man, dat has lands an' money an' niggers, 'till de trouble is in gettin' rid ob dem."

"There you do me wrong," replied Brown. "I have never thought of Isabella in connection with any riches, except those of the heart. As I expect to be judged by one who reads every motive of the soul, I assure you that I should hold the same sentiment towards her were she the poorest in the land; nay, did she even hold a position like yours."

"What! a slave?"

"Yes, by Heavens, a slave!"

"No, no," replied Esther, "you'se don't 'sider de meanin' ob you'se words. Dat am a great deal to say. Its not dat de slave's poor an' 'pendent an' frien'less; its de terrible dishonor. Dar'se de blood. You'se knows nobody's a slave, 'cept dey'se got sumthin' ob de nigger.

I'se got some ob him myself, dough a great deal more ob me am white, an' de bery bes' white blood, too."

The speaker was not so much to blame in thus vaunting her relationship to the whites ; for human nature, whether under a black or a white skin, is very much the same. It is hard to bear the cross of public scorn. The brand hurts, however unmerited its infliction. It is easy to express contempt for a prejudice which has no justification in reason or nature, but it is impossible not to feel its weight. There is no colored man or woman who would not rather be white, and few are there of the darker-hued race who are not willing to be considered whiter than they are. The same remark would, doubtless, apply with equal force to the whites, was their complexion a badge of never-ending and indiscriminate disgrace. The black man may appeal to history to prove the nobility of his race, its genius, its courage, its capacity to govern both itself and others ; he may quote an authority no less conclusive than that of Jehovah himself to establish his equal humanity, but at the same time the reproach of his origin is hard—very hard to bear.

But while Esther was indulging a weakness which is a common heritage, she was applying a test of the severest possible kind to Brown's affection for Isabella Castellos ; for, although the case put by the old woman was a supposed one, so truthful was his nature that he could give no answer except in sincerity. Such was evidently the questioner's estimate of his character, so closely did she watch every expression of his countenance.

"O, yes," said she, "its no bery leetle ting to hab de nigger blood in de veins, dough de 'mount's eber so small. Its eberyting in de world's eyes. Its shame, an' eberlastin' scorn. An' does you'se tink dat you'se could not only lub—for eberybody lubs—Bella, but marry her, gib her

you'se name, make her you'se wife, de mudder ob you'se children, if she war what you'se says, a slave, with de nigger blood in her veins?"

Brown did not answer at once. The question raised a serious and most unexpected difficulty, for so thoroughly in earnest was he at the time, that the contingency presented, seemed absolutely real. It was plain enough to his companion, who sat watching every change and shadow of his countenance, that a sharp internal struggle was going on. His hesitation was not long. A look of triumph superseded the expression of mingled pain and doubt his pale and wasted features had temporarily worn.

"Yes," he replied, "I both could and would. I should marry Isabella Castellos, if it were in my power, not only if I knew her to be what you have described, but if the world knew it. It's impossible, I know, but I only wish it were as you have supposed. Then the vain and profigate wealth-hunter would no longer seek her hand, and I might, perhaps, win the prize—a prize which could only be the more valued and valuable, if purchased with the world's contempt."

A look of intense gratitude and admiration lighted up the eyes of the old slave-woman, as she regarded the worn and weary man, as exhausted with the exertion and excitement of the interview, he lay back helpless and haggard upon his pillow.

"You'se worthy ob her," she exclaimed enthusiastically, "dough Bella's worthy ob a king. I'se may not be able to help you'se much, but dis am certain, dat you'se s'cured de eberlastin' friendship ob ole Aunt Esther."

CHAPTER IX.

JEFFERSON AND ROSE.

T is time we were going back to the plantation. While we have been elsewhere tracing the course of events essential to our story, several weeks have gone by since we saw, first Solorgne and Isabella, and then Grandaville and his troop of stalwart negroes, take their departure from the old mansion. There had, in that time, been little to disturb the quiet of the place, beyond the recollection of what has already been related. The owner and master had remained but a short time on the day he returned from the successful pursuit of Isabella and her abductor, and nothing more had been seen of him. It is true there had been many rumors in circulation concerning his intentions towards the captured runaway. At one time it was asserted that he was coming back "to whip de life out ob her ;" at another, that the favorite was to be dispossessed of the mansion and sent to the negro quarters ; and at another, that she " war gwine to be sold down de riber."

Each of these stories had its day, during which it was generally believed and circulated, and was then indignantly discarded as one of Yellow Jule's "big lies," that unpopular mulatto being the only one on the plantation that appeared to rejoice in the misfortune which had overtaken her fairer fellow-servant.

As for Isabella herself, the word "crushed" would most fitly apply to her, since her capture and return. All her strength appeared to have departed, after the ex-

ciment of her flight, and the heroism she had displayed in the final struggle for her lover. Life had lost all of its attractiveness in her eyes. The flame that had illumined it for a moment had been quenched in blood, leaving nothing but ashes behind. Look whithersoever she might, she could discover nothing but night, rayless and perpetual. She uttered neither complaint nor lamentation. Yet her changed appearance told how fatal was her grief. Her eye had lost its fire, her cheek its fullness, her frame its elasticity, and years appeared to have been added to her age. Her flowers were forgotten; her music was abandoned; and those out-door exercises which had before brought health and forgetfulness of harrowing reflections, were no longer indulged. She did not surrender all employment, but continued to exercise her accustomed control over the plantation in a mechanical sort of way, which showed that she was fast settling down into the stereotyped existence of the slave.

Whatever had been the real state of her feelings towards Solorgne prior to his death, when a desire for freedom probably influenced her quite as much as any positive love, the events that have been related worked a thorough revolution in her mind. The fallen man, having ceased to be a lover, had become an idol. His image was ever present in her thoughts, and she now lavished upon his memory all the warm affection of which her nature was susceptible. Henceforward, she was to follow her joyless way, wasting the treasures of her heart in vain regrets and silent adoration of a shade.

Yet the day on which the reader is to go back with the writer to the plantation, was one of festivity there, Isabella taking a leading part in the proceedings. It had been set apart as a holiday, on account of the marriage of Jefferson and Rose.

Upon the occurrence of the incidents already described, Jefferson had urged a decision upon the hesitating Rose with new ardor, advancing the argument that the maid was no longer obligated to adhere to the mistress, when the mistress had attempted to run away from the maid. The poor girl was sorely puzzled by that view of the case, and hardly knew how to frame her answer. She still loved Isabella, and her heart told her that in the latter's great distress was no time to leave her ; yet she found it very hard to deny her lover. In this dilemma she had finally concluded to go to Isabella and tell the whole story of her embarrassment. To her surprise, her mistress approved of Jefferson's resolution not to wed, except upon the condition of a trial for freedom, and promised a hearty co-operation in their schemes for reaching a land of liberty. Upon her suggestion a day for the wedding was fixed, and preparations were begun for a merry-making, under cover of which, it was expected, that the newly-wedded pair could be well on their way Northward before their absence would be observed.

Accordingly, the announcement of the intended marriage was made, much to the joy of the other slaves, who were ready to welcome any promise of amusement. The only exception was Yellow Jule, who, upon hearing the news, openly proclaimed her astonishment, "dat a nigger like Jefferson would take up with sich a baby as dat Rose."

"Now, you'se jess shut you'se mouf, you'se speckled half-breed," shouted the consort of the venerable Dragon, upon hearing the mulatto's spiteful remark. "You'se de pest ob dis plantation ; you'se is. You'se wuss dan de screech-owl or de big boss bull frog, with you'se scoldin' an' evil speeches. If mischief comes to dis plantation, as I'se knows its gwine to, you'se will be de cause, sartin. De debel's not far off, when you'se about.

" You'se wonders dat Jefferson takes up with de likes ob Rose. 'Tain't no wonder dat he doesn't take up with you'se, dough. Dat's what's de matter, ha! ha! ha! Sensible nigger, not to want to go off in a blue streak ob lightnin', by marryin' de debel's half-sister."

Before the tirade was finished, the object of it had fled, and was safe beyond the Dragoness' voice, from which, when pitched in anger, every one on the plantation was accustomed to fly, except her husband and her son. The first, the ancient Dragon, was so deaf, that he did not know when it thundered, and the second, the restless Frog, cared not for her tongue as long as he could keep beyond the reach of her hand, which his agility generally enabled him to do.

The wedding-day had finally arrived with all its excitements and anxieties. The old sensation was quite forgotten in the presence of the new. Even Isabella found relief in superintending the arrangements for the important occasion, and some of the old lustre came back to her face. The entire strength of the plantation, old and young, gathered on the lawn in front of the mansion. There the marriage was performed—a most simple proceeding, consisting of a union of hands, and a mutual pledging of love and fidelity, according to the form of words in use among the negroes. But unostentatious as the ceremony was, many there are that are wedded beneath lofty arches and by surpliced priests, who would gladly exchange hearts with that simple pair that did not even own the hands with which they bound their troth.

The scene was cheerful and inspiring. The bride was blooming and happy, and Jefferson, whose brow, even on that festive occasion, wore a thoughtful expression, almost forgot the trial that was before him, as he looked into the

radiant face of her who was to be the partner of his coming struggle ; while, as for the others present, the most of them were there with no thought but to enjoy themselves.

After the marriage, came the great event of the day—the dance. The proudest man there was old Eph, the head wagoner of the plantation, who, fiddle in hand, and supported by one assistant handling the bones, and another straining at a home-made flageolet, and seated high upon a temporary platform, led the music and gave direction to the movements of the dancers. There was barely an idler to be seen. Frog, at the head of a bevy of half crazy juveniles, was tumbling about in everybody's way ; and even old Dragon with one foot kept step to the measure of his younger associates ; while, as for his wife, the Dragoness, the flaming red Bandanna that adorned her head, was to be seen flashing hither and thither in the thick of the melee, like a flag in the midst of the battle.

The enjoyment had reached to the very highest point, when suddenly the music stopped, and Eph, the leader, was seen with his bow motionless upon the string, sitting as if struck with petrifaction. The effect upon the others was almost as immediate.

“ Wal, I’ll be cussed if here izzn’t a purty how-de-do. No wonder Grandaville’s goin’ to the dogs, when his niggers is ‘lowed to carry on in this ’ere style. He doesn’t understand how to manage ‘em ; that’s sartin.”

These words, spoken in a loud, sharp, and slightly nasal tone, first making known the presence of uninvited guests, explained the interruption. The intruders were three in number. Foremost was Hawks, the Yankee trader, and behind him were the two assistants whom we saw in his company at the home of Walker, the swamp-squatter. In the hands of the latter were heavy whips,

while about their persons were belts containing each two revolvers. Their countenances, as became their calling, were sensual and brutal in expression.

"Sorry to spile your fun," resumed the Yankee, with a malicious grin, as he noted the effect the presence of his party had produced, "but the fact is, we've come on business, and not calculatin' on a dance, have left our pumps at home. You'll, therefore, jist excuse us, until we git our little matter 'tended to, and then those of you that's not wanted, can keep up the shindy as long as yer wants to—leastways until you get a master that will find you somethin' better to do."

"Now Jordan, take charge of the niggers as I reads off the list."

The last words were addressed to one of the assistants, whose reply was a crack of his whip, and the display of two scraggy rows of tobacco-tarnished teeth.

"Now you niggers whose names is called," continued Hawks, opening out a piece of paper, "must know that I've bought ye of Ruy Grandaville, and all you has to do is to step out, and be quick about it, or —"

The conclusion was a significant motion of the head towards Jordan and his whip.

"Washington."

The negro bearing that honored name, a broken-spirited and prematurely aged man, who had been sold and resold until he had almost lost the sense of care for anything, at once obeyed his new master's direction, by separating himself from the others.

"Columbus."

A shriek, loud and piercing, was the response, as a colored woman threw her arms about a boy of some fifteen years of age. It was clear that they were mother and son.

It was found necessary to separate the two by force, and most summarily was it done by Jordan. Stepping forward, he tore them apart, hurling the woman to the earth with one hand, and with the other dragging the boy to a place by the side of Washington, at the same time administering a few cuffs as a matter of discipline.

Name after name followed, the calling of each being accompanied with more or less violent lamentation, until the last on the list was reached. Hawks paused a moment as he came to it.

"This 'un,'" said he, "must be the pick of the hull lot. Twenty-five hundred dollars is an awful price to give for a nigger."

"Jefferson."

Rose was standing by the side of her husband, trembling with apprehension, and clinging to him for support, as the name of the loved one smote on her ear. Instantly her arms were about his neck, and a cry of agony burst forth, so intense, so thrilling, that it caused even the Yankee to look with astonishment.

"What, in the name of all creation," said he "have we here? Wal, I declare if this chap izzn't one of the weddeners, and that's the gal. Now, now, don't take it so hard, little snow-ball! It'll be easy for you to get another feller that's jist as good, and like as not a deal whiter, if that's a recommendation to one ov your sort."

Rose heard none of his cruel words. She had fainted.

Tenderly disengaging her arms from about his neck, Jefferson laid her upon the soft grass at his feet, and standing erect and motionless, looked calmly into the face of his new owner.

"Come on, old feller!" said Hawks. "Now's your time, when the little 'un's quiet. She'll be comin' to

afore long, and then there'll be another row. So let's be off. March!"

Jefferson moved neither limb nor muscle.

"Don't yer intend to mind me?" exclaimed Hawks in a rage.

"No," said Jefferson firmly.

"Ye don't, hey! don't ye? We'll see about that," cried the Yankee, snatching a whip from one of his attendants, and at the same time ordering Jordan to "move that faintin' critter out of the way," referring to Rose.

The ruffian, stepping forward to execute his superior's command, was in the act of laying his hand upon Rose's person, when Jefferson, seizing him by the collar, gave him a whirl that sent him spinning round and round like a top, until finally he landed at full length upon the ground.

"Seize him!" furiously bellowed Hawks, but at the same time cautiously taking several steps backward, so as to place a greater distance between himself and the dusky Hercules.

Jordan was soon on his feet, and he and the other assistant made ready for an attack. As for Jefferson, he simply folded his arms across his breast, giving no indication of a purpose to resist. Seeing which, the two men advanced and seized him, each by an arm, and held him fast.

"Now jist hold the critter there," exclaimed the trader, "'til I teach him a lesson he needs to learn. He'll find he's got another master now than Grandaville, who seems to have spoilt his darkies."

With that, Hawks brought the whip ringing down upon the head and shoulders of the negro. Sharp as must have been the sting, Jefferson paid not the least attention to it, his face retaining the same cold and haughty de-

meanor. Then came blow after blow with the same result, the seeming indifference of the victim only adding to the rage of his persecutor. How much longer the torture would have continued, it is quite impossible to tell, had not Isabella, just as a heavy blow was about to fall, confronted the Yankee.

The excitements of the day, and especially of that moment, had removed all traces of recent suffering, and as she stood with fresh fire in her eye and a rising color upon her cheek, she was as beautiful and commanding as at the happiest moment of her life.

Hawks lowered the whip he had just poised on high, and looked in amazement upon the unexpected vision. He had never seen a more lovely woman.

"I—I—I beg pardon. I—I hadn't no notion, really, there was a lady present. I was jist teachin' this nigger ——"

"No apology to me, sir, is necessary," interrupted Isabella. "I do not ask your indulgence for this poor man on my account, but on hers."

As she said this, the speaker pointed to Rose, who was then returning to consciousness amid groans and tears.

"She is as much entitled to consideration at your hands, as I am," continued Isabella.

"She—she—a nigger—as much entitled to consideration! Then who, in the name of goodness, are you?"

"I am Ruy Grandaville's property—one of the people belonging to this plantation."

Hawks gave a prolonged whistle, and his look of bashful deference instantly changed to one of insolent admiration.

"Wal, I'll swear, if this doesn't beat thunder," he began. "What a place Grandaville has here, to be sure. Wish I'd know'd this when I was a-tradin' with him. But

no difference ; we'll have more business. What a magnificent critter ! A regular picter, as I live ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! and so I stopped thrashin' the nigger to pay my respects to one of Grandaville's slaves. That's a good 'un ! "

Having concluded these remarks which, although in the nature of a soliloquy, were spoken in a voice more than ordinarily distinct, the Yankee gruffly bade Isabella stand aside, as he resumed his exercise with the whip. His employment, however, was to meet with further interruption. Rose, by this time, fully restored to consciousness, rushed forward as the lash fell upon her husband's back, and throwing herself at Hawks' feet, with a cry for mercy clasped him about the knees. The Yankee gave her one glance of ineffable contempt.

"G'way, you infernal blubbering wench."

And with that the speaker, raising his foot, gave her a blow in the breast that sent her reeling backward.

Catching the insulting word, and seeing the action, Jefferson, at once dropping his immobility, and hurling the two assistants who were holding him from him, as if they were men of straw, was upon Hawks in an instant, and had clutched him firmly by the throat. The Yankee went down like a broken reed, and his face quickly grew livid under the vice-like pressure of his assailant's grasp. But ere consciousness had wholly departed, his hand sought his side ; something bright flashed in the sun ; and the report of a pistol rang out on the air.

Jefferson slowly relaxed his hold, and staggered to his feet. He drew himself to his full height, but stood as if lost in bewilderment. It was for a few moments only. Reaching out his hand as if feeling his way, while his lips moved and a gurgling sound was heard in his throat, he fell heavily and at full length. With a shriek of an-

guish, Rose threw herself upon his motionless form, and was as silent as himself.

By the time Hawks was sufficiently recovered to keep his feet, and take note of the situation, husband and wife had been separated, the latter being in the hands of Isabella and other females who were applying restoratives ; but the former was beyond the reach of all mortal remedy.

“A bad go, by all the devils !” growled the trader, as he stood over his now worthless property, with his foot moving first the head, and then other parts of the body, as he would a beeve or a swine, to see if life was wholly extinct. “Twenty-five hundred dollars gone in a jiffy ! But its the only way to deal with niggers. ‘Twon’t never do to let ‘em git the best of ye.”

“Boys,” he added, addressing his two assistants, “git the other niggers ready, and let’s be out of this place.”

Then, giving the prostrate body a kick, when convinced that life had wholly fled, he continued :

“This fellow, I calc’late, we’ll have to leave to comfort that black wife of his’n, if she ever comes to—hope she won’t.”

The balance of the people purchased being formed into line of march, the trader placed himself at the head, while his two assistants brought up the rear, and the procession, amid the wails and prayers of parting friends and relatives, moved slowly away from the plantation.

As Hawks rode forward at the head of the company, his mind was busy with the incidents of the day. It was not so much the loss of Jefferson, although twenty-five hundred dollars was a large amount in the Yankee’s eyes, as the recollection of Isabella that engrossed his thoughts. Passion and vanity alike suggested to him the desirableness of her possession.

"Golly, what a magnificent critter!" he said to himself. "She's an article worth the havin'. Not one of them chaps that puts on so much style has anything to touch her. With her, I could take the shine off any of 'em. I'm bound to have her somehow. Grandaville's hard up, and money's the thing that will do it."

The reader will have no difficulty in comprehending the motives that influenced the Yankee. Isabella's beauty had captivated his fancy, being of the kind most attractive to his coarse nature. But there was another incentive. In the society of fast men in which he was ambitious to shine, there was as much rivalry in the possession of beautiful slave-women, as elsewhere, with the same class, becomes conspicuous in eager emulation for fast horses and extravagant equipages. In the city of New Orleans, at the time of which I am writing, the prevailing system of slavery enabled those so inclined, and having the means, to gratify their tastes in that direction to the full circuit of their pleasure. Hawks, aware of the inferiority of his accomplishments, and often made to feel the contempt of his chosen associates, thought he saw in Isabella the means of acquiring importance in the eyes of the men whose good opinion he was especially anxious to secure. Having, therefore, two inducements to urge him on, he determined to lose no time in making sure of the prize.

Accordingly, on the very next day, he set out for Grandaville's apartments at as early an hour as he supposed the latter's habits would justify. His visit could not have been more unfortunately timed. Luck had been unusually perverse the night before; and besides, there was another cause of irritation just then operating with Grandaville. Isabella Castellos' health had become so far restored, that a day for the marriage had again been fixed.

This fact, which ought to have been a source of joy to the expectant bridegroom, and which was a consequence of his own urgency, became, on the contrary, the occasion of unanticipated annoyance. Grandaville had never loved Miss Castellos, much as he had respected and admired her, for the reason that he had once devotedly loved the other Isabella; and though his passion had grown dull with satiety, he now found, as he stood upon the brink of matrimony, that the image of his cherished mistress had strangely come to vex him. Do what he could, he had that morning been wholly unable to banish her from his thoughts, or the consciousness that she was still very near to his heart. It was in vain that he considered the folly of such meditations; the face of the slave-girl, as it appeared on the occasion of first meeting her, or at the time of her maturer beauty, or at that midnight hour before the abandoned cabin in the swamp, when she had stood up before him and demanded the duellist's opportunity for Edmund Solorgne, constantly presented itself, until thoroughly provoked, he had quite lost his temper, and a dozen times over had frightened Napoleon Bonaparte with the threat of immediate sale to the Yankee trader.

The consequence was, that the old servant, as he opened the door in answer to Hawks' summons, was so confounded by meeting that individual face to face, that he could do nothing but stand and stare at him, completely blocking the way. The Yankee was too impatient for delay, and so quickly shoved past the old negro, giving him, as he did so, a violent push to one side which greatly increased his hostility.

Once in the room, Hawks, without noticing Grandaville's look of irritation, proceeded to recount his experience of the day before, making no concealment of

any of the circumstances attending Jefferson's death. In fact he gloried in the incident, illustrating as it did his boasted method of dealing with "niggers."

"He's the second 'un," he remarked with no inconsiderable consequence, "I've used up for disputin' my 'thority, though 'tother 'un was regularly killed in the whippin'. I don't 'low no opposition from niggers, but it costs like blazes, as ye can see, to carry out the principle. The trouble is that the most valuable 'uns is the most spunky."

Callous as Grandaville had grown under the hardening influences of the life he was leading, such talk only served to increase his disgust for the speaker; while Napoleon Bonaparte, who had been listening with scarcely restrainable indignation, heartily longed for another cup of scalding hot coffee to bestow upon him.

"But now to the point," said the Yankee, putting on a business air. "'Ye see I'm not one that talks for talk's sake. "'Mong other things, I discovered that ye had a likely sort of gal on yer plantation. If she hadn't told me she wus one of your slaves herself, I wouldn't have know'd she wusn't white. Isabeller's the name, I believe. Now I've took a fancy for that gal, and have come round this mornin' to see what you'll take for her. Bein' as I'm a good customer, and was unlucky with 'tother purchase, I suppose ye wouldn't think of axin' more than twenty-five hundred dollars, the price of the dead darkey. Its a big pile to give for a gal, but as she seems to be sumthin' rather extra, there's the money, if its all right."

With that, the Yankee took out of his pocket a roll of bills, and in a free and familiar sort of way held it towards Grandaville.

Ruy looked, first at the money, and then at Hawks,

while he seemed to be struggling to keep down the rage that was swelling up within him. It was in vain. Suddenly bolting from his seat, he made a dash at the Yankee and grasped him by the throat:

"Insolent scoundrel!" he exclaimed, as he applied a tremendous squeeze, accompanied with a vigorous shaking, "dare you insult me with such a proposition? Sell Isabella to you!—(another shake). I'd give her to the dogs first. Mention such a thing to me again, and I'll give you what you deserve, you villain!—(more choking and shaking). I'll strike you dead on the spot."

There was something good in Ruy Grandaville yet.

By this time Hawks had grown almost black in the face. Completely taken by surprise, he was too much frightened for resistance, if he had possessed the ability, seeing which, Grandaville relinquished his grasp.

"Now," said he, "out of this, and never let me see your sneaking face again."

Then, seeing that the Yankee was too much weakened, or confused, to stir, he turned to Napoleon Bonaparte, and said :

"Boney, help this fellow to his feet. If he don't go willingly, tumble him into the street."

The old negro, who was almost beside himself with glee at the performance, obeyed with alacrity. Taking Hawks by the collar, and the Yankee was only too glad to get out of the room, he led him to the door, opened it, and gave him a pitch—then closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER X.

A YANKEE TRICK.

T would be useless to venture upon a description of the Yankee's fury, when he found himself upon the street, after his ejection from Grandaville's apartments.

"The mean, rascally cuss, if he was born on Southern sile!" he began. "He sells me his worthless niggers that I have to shoot, and chokes me when I tries to buy what I wants."

Here Hawks had to stop to relieve his throat, as rage, at this presentation of the injustice of which he had been the victim, threatened to do what Grandaville's hands had come so near accomplishing.

"But blast him," he went on, "I'll be even with him yit! I'll have him 'rested for 'sault and battery."

And with the enunciation of this dreadful purpose, the speaker started rapidly in the direction of a magistrate's office. But, having reached the door of that functionary, he paused and stood for some time upon the step, as if in a brown study. Then, turning about, he walked away in another direction. And as he proceeded, gradually the cloud lifted from his brow, and a smile, although bitter and revengeful, appeared upon his face. Broader and broader grew the grin that lit up his features, until he seemed almost ready to break into a laugh, by the time that, having entered a narrow, filthy street, he found himself before a door over which was the sign :

"PATRICK WELDON, BROKER AND AGENT."

The room into which the door opened was a gloomy

hole. The floor, in lieu of carpet, was covered with spittle and litter. The walls were nearly black. The furniture consisted of a wash-stand, on which were a handleless pitcher and a cracked basin, two or three rickety chairs, and a secretary whose pigeon-holes were crammed with dusty papers, and upon whose open lid were an ink-stand and some loose sheets of foolscap.

Curled up in one of the chairs, as Hawks entered, was an old man, whose filthy and generally repulsive appearance suggested him as the proprietor of the den. He was a thin, skinny creature, with narrow face, scarcely any hair, and either weak or sore eyes, which kept his hollow cheeks constantly wet with running moisture. He was very lame, too, as was to be seen when he attempted to walk, having to hobble upon a crutch that had never received any coating except the grease and dirt that had come by use. His apparel was in keeping with the wearer—coarse, ill-fitting and soiled. Altogether, he was a most wretched-looking object.

“How’s the devil to-day?”

Such was Hawks’ salutation upon confronting this ill-favored creature.

“You ought to know best. He always comes when you do, he! he! he!”

The old man’s laugh was a wheezy cachinnation, most painful to listen to, which ended in a cough so violent that it seemed that the rickety skeleton must explode, and be scattered about the room.

By the time Weldon’s composure was restored, the Yankee had seated himself in a chair, and elevated his feet upon the secretary’s open lid, overturning the ink-stand in so doing, and scattering its contents among the papers lying about. Indifferently regarding the accident which the old man did not observe, Hawks proceeded:

"Got many lame ducks in your trap these times?"

"Some—not many—have you been spotting any? he! he! he!"

And again came the explosive cough.

"Wal, I reckon I do know ov one that's in purty good order for the pluckin'," responded Hawks, when his companion's serenity had returned.

"Nobody's so likely to pounce on it as a Hawks, he! he! he!"

And at this pun upon the Yankee's name, Weldon went off into a fit of coughing more violent than ever.

"See here, old man!" said Hawks, when silence had come, "if you don't quit that he-he-in' and nonsense, one ov these times you'll choke."

Hawks stopped short at the word "choke," putting his hand impulsively to his throat, and making a very wry face.

"But the duck—the lame duck—who is it? Who is it?"

This was spoken by Weldon with a quick, nervous voice, and without either laugh or cough.

"Would you like to jine in the business—the pluckin', I mean?" answered the Yankee with characteristic indirectness.

"If its safe, if its safe. It must be very safe."

"Do you know Ruy Grandaville?"

"I ought to. I've got some of his paper, and its overdue."

"Wouldn't wonder. He's mighty extravagant—one ov them chaps that come into the world to spend money, not to make it. They're useful to us, though they do lit on to despise us. Wal, lit 'em."

The last two words were ejected with spiteful emphasis.

"But what about Ruy Grandaville?" asked Weldon eagerly.

"Has he paper floating about?"

"Plenty of it."

"Cheap?"

"A drug."

"Then buy ten thousand dollars of it—that's what I've got to say."

"But has he got the money?"

"No; but I have."

"What! will you indorse his paper?"

"No; but I know sumthin'."

"What is it?"

"Hé's goin' to marry a fortin."

The old man shook his head.

"A poor dependence," said he. "The woman may die, or change her mind. Women are uncertain at best. I've lost a great deal by them. Only last year one deceived me terribly—shamefully."

"You don't pretend to say that any woman ever agreed to marry you, does ye?" asked the Yankee, grinning maliciously.

"It wasn't in that way," replied Weldon. "I'll tell you how it was. You see I'd bought up a young fellow's paper—a quantity of it—cheap—twenty-five cents on the dollar. Another day would have made it all safe, when the unprincipled woman—she was a widow, and twice the boy's age, too—got wind of the debts, and repudiated her engagement. I went to see her as soon as I heard of her conduct. I put the matter feelingly—told her how much of the poor boy's paper I held, and how poor I was. She just laughed in my face, and offered me a picayune. Then, when in my indignation at her baseness, I accused her of dishonesty, she flew into a temper, called me an old thief, and ordered a black man to throw me out of the house, and he did it."

The fit of laughter into which the Yankee fell, on hearing this doleful story, was long continued.

"Wal, wal," said he, "I doesn't wonder at your bein' shy ov the wimmin; but in this case the gal has nothin' to do with the property. Listen, and I'll tell ye how 'tis. Grandaville, as I told ye, is goin' to marry a fortin. That will make him anxious, you see, that there shan't be no trouble 'till the weddin's over. Now I've had dealin' with Grandaville ov late, and that's lit me into the marrow ov his affairs. I have naterally an inquirin' turn ov mind."

"Impudence, some call it, he! he! he!"

And again the wheezy laugh was followed by the choking and explosive cough.

"Now, see here, old fellow," exclaimed Hawks petulantly, "this thing's got to be stopped, or I stop right here. I ain't goin' to stand it, to be blackguarded in that ere sort ov way, nohow."

"Go on, go on," said Weldon, good-humoredly.

"Wal, as I was a-sayin'," resumed the Yankee, "I've discovered that Grandaville, spite ov his nonsense and fast livin', has got property, mostly niggers, that's worth twenty thousand dollars, if its worth a penny. For reasons 'taint necessary to explain, its property Grandaville doesn't want to part with, and for reasons equally of no account to the like ov you, its property I wants to git. Now there's jist one way ov forcin' it out of his clutches, and that is by compellin' him to raise a nice little sum of money before he can git married, and so come into that fortin. And to do that, I can't think ov no surer way than to set an old dog like you a-dunnin' and pesterin' at his heels, and worryin' the life out ov him, until he'll raise the money jist to git rid ov ye. I know all about your tricks. When ye git a man's paper, you're worse than

the seven year scratches. You'll follow a critter until he either has to pay, or hang himself to git peace. And ye can do it as nobody else can. You're sich a wheezin', rickety old skeleton, that everybody's afraid to strike or kick ye, lest the next thing he'll be on trial for murder. You're safe in sayin' things to Grandaville for which he'd choke the life out ov me."

Here Hawks pressed his hand upon his throat and grinned dolefully.

"Besides which," the Yankee went on, "ye have the impudence of the devil. In fact, I believe you're some way related to Old Scratch. You look like him, anyhow."

"Thank ye for the compliment, he ! he ! he !"

"Now ye see my plan," resumed Hawks, when his companion had got over his coughing. "You're to buy up Grandaville's paper, now when its goin' rag cheap, and then take to follerin' and persecutin' him, callin' at his room, waitin' at his door, stoppin' him on the street, and finally threatnin' to go the church when he's gittin' married, and dunnin' him at the altar. And then, when he's worried past all patience, and a-feared, besides, that the noise ye make may interfere with his marryin' that fortin, I'm to happen round as his friend, and relieve him of that property of his'n for what will buy his peace from you, ye old carrion scenter. There's a speculation for both ov us."

"I see, I see," said the old man, with a greedy fire in his eye. "We are to put our heads together and squeeze him."

"Choke him—choke him," screamed the Yankee, bounding from his chair, and with great vigor going through the operation of compressing an imaginary windpipe. "Yes, yes ; together we are to choke him."

The result of the interview was, that Hawks left the note-broker's establishment in capital spirits.

CHAPTER XI.

PREPARING FOR THE SACRIFICE.

HE wedding-day had at last been definitely and finally fixed. Isabella Castellos' health was so far re-established that her medical attendants could interpose no further objection, and there was no one else anxious or willing to ask for delay.

Ruy Grandaville had acted with great discretion. He had urged no unseemly haste. He had even expressed solicitude, when the concluding arrangement for the marriage ceremony was being entered into, lest the excitement attending it would be too great for the invalid. His bearing, throughout Isabella's entire sickness, had been characterized by delicacy and tact. While diligent in his inquiries, and in many ways giving evidence of affectionate interest, he had been guilty of no intrusive-ness. He had never wearied Isabella with importunate and unwelcome attentions, acting more like an old friend than a lover.

But while he was thus careful, and even reserved, in his intercourse with his expectant bride, he had pursued quite a different policy towards Isabella's father. Losing no fit opportunity, when not engaged with Colonel Masters and other boon companions, for seeking the old gentleman's presence, he had craftily and successfully striven to render his society agreeable. He had humored his weaknesses, fallen in with his accustomed trains of thought, and brought fresh arguments to the support of

his favorite theories. He had especially deplored the degeneracy of the times, as shown in the facility with which mere upstarts and adventurers secured connections with the oldest and best families, thus corrupting the only pure blood in the land. He feelingly alluded to Isabella's sufferings, and unconsciously, as it appeared, showed his impatience in consequence of the delay in the nuptials, thus more and more winning the old man's heart, who daily thought he saw more of the father in the son, and making him the stronger advocate of the measure for which he was most anxious. By way of compensation for the hours thus lost, he scolded Napoleon Bonaparte more vigorously when in his own apartments, and the more eagerly sought the companionship of Colonel Masters and the balance of that set, as opportunity offered.

As for Isabella Castellos, she manifested no disposition but one of compliance with her father's and her intended husband's wishes. While her manner indicated resignation rather than any other feeling, her complacency deceived her father into the belief that she was contented and happy, and comforted with that assurance, and still more with the reflection that he would soon have the worry and anxiety of the whole matter off his hands and mind, he was supremely happy himself.

Aunt Esther understood the true situation of affairs far better than any other one, and upon her devolved the chief responsibility and labor of making ready for the marriage. Apparently accepting the situation and its probable issue as inevitable, she not only busied herself with commendable zeal in meeting the numberless arrangements that were rendered necessary, but sought to strengthen Isabella for the trial that was before her. To this end she not only assumed an air of cheerfulness her-

self, but endeavored to interest her young mistress in various details of preparation, consulting her on all proper occasions, and laying before her the results of her labors with great seeming pride and satisfaction.

Nor were her efforts to go without reward. On the day before the one selected for the marriage ceremony, Isabella availed herself of the opportunity when they were alone together, to hand the old lady a paper which, she stated, she had that morning received from her father.

It was a deed of manumission, wherein it was expressed that, in consideration of the long and faithful services which the grantee had rendered, more especially in nursing and watching over the grantor's only child, the maker, Ferdinand Castellos, conferred upon Esther, commonly called Aunt Esther, her immediate and absolute freedom. The instrument contained another clause. That was to the effect that, whereas the grantee had had a daughter, born a slave of the said Ferdinand Castellos, who had been sold and transferred to his late friend, Philip Grandaville, he, the said Ferdinand Castellos, in further acknowledgment of the said Esther's services, bound himself to use all reasonable efforts to secure such a reconveyance of the said daughter, who had been named Isabella, as would lead to her liberation likewise; and to that end and purport, he therein and thereby made over to the said Esther all interest and right he might at any time have and acquire in and to the said Isabella, that the said mother might have the title to her daughter in her own control.

The thanks of the old lady to her young mistress were so warm and abundant, that the latter was compelled to remind her that the act was not hers, but her father's.

"I'se knows bery well whar it all comes from," was Esther's reply.

How the only other important party to the arrangement was being affected by the anticipated event, can best be shown by Ruy Grandaville's remarks to his faithful old servant, Napoleon Bonaparte, on the morning of the day preceding the one fixed for the wedding.

"Brandy, Boney ; a full glass of brandy ! I feel awful this morning. Last night was a fearful one. That simpleton, Solorgne, was back again, and your friend, the Yankee trader, paid me another visit ; only this time he choked me, instead of me choking him. Ah, that reminds me ! Did you give him my note ?"

"Yes, Massa."

"So he'll be here this morning. Well, there's no help for it. I've got no other resource for money, and that old villain of a broker is remorseless. Whoever would have supposed it could come to this, that a vile note-shaver would dare stop Ruy Grandaville upon the street to dun him for money, and dog his steps from morning to night as if he were a felon. And the worst of it, to tell me that he would attend my wedding, and stand by my side at the altar. I've no doubt he'd do it. He has assurance for anything, and he's too weak and insignificant to chastise. And all for ten thousand dollars ! O, was ever mortal man so beset ! Curses on the luck that has brought me to this !"

"And now comes the bitterest cup. I have to meet that detested Yankee, and sell him Isabella. It has to be done, but Heavens ! who would ever have supposed it possible ? I have seen the time when I would have given my soul for that woman, and I love her yet. Her face haunts me like a spirit. But—but, perhaps its best after all. I won't think of her so much when she's off my hands—gone. And besides, what business have I to keep her, when I'm about to be married to a woman who

is purity itself? Yes, I'd better let her go, but its hard, hard, hard! Boney, a little more brandy. I need all the strength it can give me."

The trial Grandaville so much dreaded was near at hand. He had little more than announced the resolution above conveyed, which he did as he walked up and down his room with half-completed toilet, clenching his fists and spitting out his words with feverish energy, when the presence of the Yankee was made known.

A very noticeable change in the manner of that individual was apparent, as soon as he entered the room. Striding loftily past the old negro as he opened the door, he bestowed upon Grandaville a scarcely perceptible bow. It was evident that he felt himself master of the situation. His triumph, however, was not to be without its drawbacks. Backing towards a chair, in obedience to a polite request from Grandaville to be seated, it so happened that he settled himself into a basin of hot water which Boney, in anticipation of his master's ablutions, had carelessly left upon that particular chair, and still more carelessly failed to remove, when he observed what the Yankee was about to do. With a yell of pain and rage Hawks sprang to his feet, but the effect of the accident was in one sense most salutary. In his mortification, a large share of the visitor's stiffness was lost. Seeing which, Grandaville hastened to offer the apology which his former conduct made necessary as a preliminary to present negotiations.

"I have to express my regret," said he, "at my haste on the occasion of your last call upon me. I ought not to have allowed anything you could say to affect my temper."

To a more discerning person there would have been more of insult than confession in the words, but the

speaker rightly calculated upon Hawks' obtuseness in their use, as that personage was highly elated at what he regarded as the Southerner's condescension.

"Don't mention it," replied the Yankee, with an air of unconcern. "It wusn't nothin' I cared anythin' about. I wusn't hurt a particle."

"And now," continued Grandaville, anxious to get the disagreeable business over, "that matter being satisfactorily explained, to the point of interest to both of us. I find that I have a few more people whose services I do not need, and as you have already made one purchase from me, I presumed that you would be ready for another. The fact is that I wish to raise money, as a party holding some of my paper is pressing for payment."

"Is he an old cripple ov a critter, blear-eyed and lame, who looks as if he might be a-beggin' for old clothes?" asked Hawks with the most innocent expression of countenance.

"The same," replied Grandaville, surprised at the accuracy of his companion's description.

"I thought it might be," remarked Hawks carelessly, "as I met jist sich an old scare-crow at the street door, as I was a-comin' in. He axed me if I was a-goin' to see Mr. Grandaville. I told him I was. 'Tell him,' said he, 'that I want to see him, but that I ain't in no hurry, as I ain't got nothin' else to do to-day. I'll wait here,' said he."

The irritation betrayed on Grandaville's countenance, at the receipt of the Yankee's story, which had, in fact, been manufactured for the occasion, satisfied Hawks that he had succeeded in making a point. He, therefore, waited for his companion to take the next step in the business.

"Wishing to discharge my obligations which the old scoundrel has secured, I have made out a list of certain

slaves I am prepared to part with," observed Grandaville with assumed carelessness. "You will find the prices very reasonable."

Hawks held out his hand for the paper, and it was with difficulty that he concealed his exultation, when he saw that the first name on the list was "Isabella," being described as "housekeeper." His Yankee cunning, however, did not desert him.

"Should like to accommodate you, should indeed;" he drawlingly replied, "but the fact is that money jist now is most awful tight. I don't see——"

Here he stopped.

"Cannot you manage to take the property," inquired Grandaville with an air of deep anxiety.

"Wal," slowly replied the Yankee, "I don't know. The price I see you've set down on the paper's twenty thousand dollars. Perhaps I might manage to raise ten."

"It is yours," said Grandaville emphatically and at once.

It was arranged that Hawks was to see to securing the paper in Weldon's hands, and call at Grandaville's rooms at twelve o'clock on the morrow to receive the conveyance for the slaves. The marriage was to be an hour later.

Hawks was almost beside himself with exultation, as he again found himself upon the street. So erratic were his movements, as he skipped along with grinning countenance, and hands every moment or two brought together with a ringing smack, that the passers-by stopped and looked after him. They concluded that he must be crazy.

"That," said he "closes accounts between us, and leaves a right handsome balance on my side. Them Southern chaps can beat me on style, but they're no match for

Yankee pluck and genius. Rather calc'lated I'd come out ahead at the end ov the business. And the gal, golly ! but she's one to make a feller's grinders water."

And here the Yankee executed such a leap into the air, and gave expression to such a peculiar exclamation of delight, that he barely escaped arrest by the nearest policeman as a lunatic who had strayed from his keepers.

Rushing into the den of the old note-broker, who at that moment was curled up half asleep in his chair, he startled that hoary reprobate by shouting in his ear :

"We've won the game, old feller ; we three."

"Three !" exclaimed Weldon, opening wide his watery eyes.

"Yes, three ; you—me—and the devil."

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE ALTAR.

“**R**RANDY ! Some brandy, I say ! ”

The words had in them more than usual eagerness, when uttered on the morning of the day fixed for the speaker’s—Ruy Grandaville’s—marriage.

The old servant Napoleon Bonaparte fairly started with affright, when, in obedience to his master’s demand, he approached him with the glass containing the stimulant for which he had called.

Grandaville was sitting up in his bed, his cheeks so hollow, his eyes so wild and feverish, and his whole countenance so haggard and pale, as to be scarcely recognizable.

“Boney,” said he, as he handed back the empty glass, his hand still shaking, notwithstanding the strengthening draught, “this is to be my wedding-day, and I believe I’m the most miserable dog in creation. I’m to give away the only woman I ever loved, and tie myself to one I never did love. Its a terrible drag, but I wish it were over. Then, perhaps, I’d have some peace. They were all back last night, Solorgne, Isabella, the Yankee—all pointing their fingers at me and hissing, and I couldn’t raise my hand to drive them away. Curses on these visions ! We’ll have to be very busy, though. There’s fifty things to attend to this morning. Has the tailor sent in my clothes ? ”

“ Yes, Massa.”

"The lawyer, has he sent round any papers?"

"Yes, Massa."

"Then I'm ready for Hawks, the villain!"

"Boney," continued Grandaville, after a brief pause following the mention of Hawks' name, during which the speaker's countenance assumed a cast of intense loathing, "I wish to Heaven we could exchange places. I'm more of a slave, ten times over, than you are. I'm about to do what my very soul detests, and all because my masters demand it. You have but one. I have a hundred, and every one of them a devil. O, Boney, there are no tyrants like a man's own crimes and vices. But it can't be helped! It can't be helped! A little more brandy, and we'll begin the work of preparation. I want no breakfast this morning."

The day opened no more cheerfully to the other party to whom it was likely to prove so important.

Aunt Esther almost screamed out as she met the pale, sad, but tearless, face of Isabella Castellos, upon entering the latter's apartment that morning. There seemed to be no life in it. The snowy gown that was round her, and the pillow upon which her head rested, were scarcely whiter than her cheek.

"O, mamma, I'm so glad you have come, so glad! I have been so miserable."

And the girl, half rising, buried her face upon the old woman's bosom, as the latter reached the bed-side, and the tears that had been restrained to that moment, began to flow freely in the presence of conscious sympathy.

"Cheer up, chile! dis will neber do," said the old servant briskly, though her own eyes were wet at the time. "Remember dat dis is de day when you'se needs to be bery strong. Dar, dat's a good chile, now!"

"Yes, yes, mamma, I know how foolish it is to give

way so. But I've had so much to try me. All last night it seemed as if I was not alone. I was back in the school-room once more, and that poor, dead man, my generous, brave co-laborer, was there. He spoke not a word, but his eyes seemed to say so much. I felt that they were reproaching me for going to give myself to one of his—enemies ; and I could not meet them. Their very gentleness carried a curse. It was only a dream, I know ; but mamma, mamma, it was so like reality."

Then, after a few moments of silent weeping, Isabella raised her head, and looking up into the old woman's face, resumed her speaking :

"Mamma, I want you, when—when its over, and you go to that country up North where you can live in freedom, to find the mother of that noble young man, and tell her there were hearts that bled for him besides her own—won't you, mamma ? "

"No, no, chile, I'se can't neber go 'way an' leave you'se, neber, neber ! I'se don't want no freedom without you'se."

And here the old woman broke down completely, throwing her arms about Isabella and straining her to her bosom, while her sobs followed hysterically. The effect upon her companion was most beneficial. It caused her to turn comforter, and thus gave her strength to master her own feelings.

"There, that's a good mamma !" she began. "Don't weep any more. I'm sure there's nothing to cry for. I'm simply going to do my duty. I'm going to please my father, and help you and my dear sister, and give freedom to ever so many poor people that otherwise would live and die in slavery. Its a great privilege I have. I ought to be very happy. I'm proud of the work before me. No, no, I'll not cry any more. I'll be strong.

You'll wonder to see how strong I'll be. So, so, let us begin to get ready. There's a great deal to do this morning, you know. Has the hair-dresser come? And the dress-maker, has she sent round that skirt? The confectioner, I'm sure, ought to have been here for his final orders before this."

And in a very few minutes more the two women were busy with their preparations and arrangements, both wearing countenances that were almost cheerful, whatever the hidden feelings of their hearts.

Isabella was to pass through one other preliminary trial.

Every household that has had a marriage in it, knows how powerful are the emotions it awakens. It is an event which unlocks all hearts. Differences are forgotten, if not forgiven, under the softening influences of the most trying, and at the same time most wholesome, crisis, and slumbering affections are awakened to fresh life and energy. The summer's rain is not more grateful to the arid soil of the sun-parched field, than a wedding to that family whose sympathies have become benumbed by the slow attrition of duties languidly performed, or perverted by the presence of jealousies that ought never to have existed.

Isabella's father sought a final interview with the child he loved, before yielding her to the guardianship of another. His countenance was beaming with complacency, the result, in part, of the affection he bore her, and in part of his own great personal satisfaction. The meeting was full of endearment.

"For one thing I know you will give me credit," said the old man, as his voice slightly trembled, "that everything I have done has been directed with a view to your happiness. In arranging with my oldest and dearest

friend for your permanent settlement in life, I knew that I was providing a companion whose unexceptionable birth would furnish the surest guaranty of spotless honor and a constant heart. The knowledge that you are about to be established according to the view I have long entertained, is the crowning gratification of my life."

"O father, there is nothing I would not do to secure your happiness."

"I believe you my dearest child, I believe you. It has always seemed as if your heart met mine more than half way. Our love is one that can never be destroyed. Although you are about to pass under the authority of another, I feel that there is nothing which can ever come between our hearts."

"O father, you cannot tell what comfort those words give me. Is there, indeed, nothing that can ever divide us in our love?"

"Nothing, child, nothing."

And having spoken a few more well-meant words, intended to strengthen Isabella for the exertion that was before her, the old man hastened away to prepare for his part in the day's proceedings. He could not have been more delighted if the wedding that was about to take place had been his own. The pallor of his daughter's brow he could not fail to see, but he attributed it to her recent illness and the excitement of the occasion. That any one could be unhappy at such a time, he never for a moment imagined, he was so joyful himself.

Twelve o'clock came, and with it Hawks, the Yankee trader, at Ruy Grandaville's apartment. The transfers of the slaves, through the professional diligence of Seabry Anthony, Esq., were ready, and it took but a few minutes to conclude the business between vendor and purchaser, there being no courtesies to waste on either

side. Grandaville handed over the conveyances of the slaves, and received in return ten thousand dollars in his own paper, which Hawks had obtained from the note-broker, Patrick Weldon. The delivery complete, the Yankee lost no time in ridding Grandaville of his unwelcome presence, so eager was he to acquire actual possession of his new purchase. Mounted upon his swiftest saddle-horse, he was soon on his way to the plantation, his mind full of delicious fancies concerning the beautiful woman who had become his property. What was the issue of his journey, will appear in a subsequent chapter.

One of the largest and most elegant churches in the city of New Orleans had been selected as the scene of the marriage ceremony that was to unite two of its oldest families. As became the position of the parties, an eager and brilliant assembly had collected as witnesses. The great building was crowded with representatives of wealth and fashion. The names of Grandaville and Castellos were quite enough to attract the elite of society, even if Ruy had not been one of its most honored members, and Isabella had been less widely loved for her many estimable qualities.

There were the usual stir and flutter and careless gayety, followed by the hush of eager expectation as the bridal party entered.

Ruy Grandaville appeared somewhat pale and haggard, but calm, self-poised and commanding. All of his native stateliness was apparent as he advanced to the altar. Equally quiet and composed was she who leaned upon his arm, but so white and shadowy did she seem in her sweeping marriage robe and wreath of pale, delicate flowers, that a shudder ran through the assembly as it gazed upon her. There was not one there to whom the thought of a funeral did not come. Yet there was no

sign of weakness or hesitation in either look or bearing of the fragile girl. Her brow carried the serenity, if not the enthusiasm, of the martyr.

One radiant countenance there was in the party. Old Ferdinand Castellos was conspicuously happy. The smile that irradiated his features showed plainly enough his supreme satisfaction, the only possible regret that could enter his mind being that his quondam associate, Philip Grandaville, was not there to witness the fruition of their hopes, and share in the triumph of the hour.

The altar was reached. The parties had taken their respective places. The blessing of Heaven had been invoked, and the reverend and saintly man who was to conduct the ceremony, amid the deepest stillness on the part of the assembled multitude, was in the very act of beginning the marriage rite, when there was a most unlooked for interruption.

“I object!”

The words were naturally, even calmly, spoken, and yet so distinctly as to be perfectly audible to every one in the house.

All eyes instantly sought the speaker, and now, for the first time, the old servant, Aunt Esther, was observed standing a short distance from the altar. Every one recognized her as the cause of the interruption. In one hand she held up a paper in such a way as, at the same time, to draw attention to herself and give emphasis to her words.

The amazement of all was intense. Unbroken silence for a moment prevailed, the officiating clergyman looking hopelessly upon the disturber, and a spell seeming to rest upon all the others.

Ferdinand Castellos was the first to recover from the general surprise.

With face fairly scarlet with rage, rushing before the old woman, he exclaimed :

“ Slave, are you crazy ? Hence this instant ! ”

“ Pardon me, sir ; I am no longer your slave ! ”

And the woman held up before her former master his own deed of manumission, while her eye fearlessly met his.

“ Then what—what does this conduct mean ? ”

Angry as he was, the speaker was surprised into an attitude of deference by the other’s singularly deliberate manner.

“ It means that you are about to dispose of my property,” replied Esther, now dropping entirely her negro *patois*, “ without asking my consent. That woman,” pointing to Isabella, who was standing as white as a marble statue, and almost as rigid, “ is, by virtue of the instrument I hold in my hand, my slave. She is my daughter. Ah ! I see you start, Ferdinand Castellos ; but listen, and I will explain all. When your wife died, leaving an infant daughter, I was the mother of a child but a few days born, which, as you well know, was your child as well as mine. I was given the motherless babe to nurse. The children, as I soon discovered, bore a striking resemblance to each other. Both were white, for I have but little negro blood in my veins. It would have been strange if, under such circumstances, I had not thought of the interests of my own flesh and blood. An exchange was easily made. Little more than a transfer of garments was required, and my assurance supplied the balance of what was necessary. The fraud upon my master did not greatly trouble me. I considered that both were his children ; that both had an equal natural claim upon him ; and when one was to be a lady, and the other a slave, I simply sought to give my own offspring the preference. That woman at the altar is my

child, born of my loins, and by the conveyance which I hold from her and my former master, now my property. Where the other child is, you, Ferdinand Castellos, ought to know."

"It is false, false, false," shouted Castellos; but his lips were white, and his voice, as was noticed, was tremulous, as he spoke. "Woman, where is your proof?"

"At hand," replied Esther with perfect coolness. "Doctor Tallifarro was your family physician at the time of your wife's death and the birth of her child. He will recollect that on the same day, but before the other infant was born, my child through the carelessness of another, was severely burned upon the arm between the elbow and the shoulder. He dressed the wound, and continued to prescribe for the little sufferer. The limb was saved, but the doctor, remarking upon the whiteness of my child's complexion, was accustomed jokingly to say that the scar that would be left for life, would always remain as evidence in case she should attempt to pass herself off as a person of free birth. Doctor Tallifarro is now present, and can speak for himself."

At once all eyes were turned inquiringly upon a distinguished and venerable appearing man, who was present among the friends of the Castellos' family, being the eminent physician whose name had been used. He came forward in obedience to the universal, but unspoken, demand.

"I remember the circumstance of which the woman speaks," he said.

"Then look here!"

And with these words, Esther, having suddenly approached Isabella, with a quick movement of the hand tore the fragile material composing the bridal dress from the shoulder to the elbow of one arm, exposing a deep,

wrinkled scar as if made by a burn, midway between the two.

An exclamation partly of surprise, and partly of horror, broke from the lips of all witnessing the act and its result. Ferdinand Castellos, totally unmanned, could only wring his hands. But the trial was not ended.

“Doctor”—and this time the speaker was Ruy Grandaville—“is it not possible that the scar might be the result of an injury secretly inflicted by this crafty woman, without the knowledge of others?”

“Under certain circumstances it would certainly be possible,” replied the physician.

“It is wrong,” resumed Ruy, speaking with noticeable calmness, “that the innocent should suffer, and at the same time I have the greatest interest in being assured that no imposition is practiced. I must, therefore, ask you, Doctor Tallifarro, whether there is anything else you can see, either to disprove or confirm the woman’s words. If possible, let the question be settled at once, and this terrible suspense brought to an end.”

Thus appealed to, Doctor Tallifarro could not decline entering upon such an inspection as was possible under the circumstances. Sinking upon one knee, he first glanced at the exposed arm of the now insensible girl, who had been borne to the nearest seat. Then, looking searchingly into her face, he examined her hair, her lips, her eyes, and every minutiae of her features. This done, he rose mechanically to his feet. Several minutes passed, and yet he did not speak. With one hand covering his eyes, he seemed to be lost in deep reflection, but it was too evident from the pallor which had overspread his features, that some painful thought had possession of his mind. The suspense on the part of those who were awaiting his decision was terrible.

"Speak," at last said Ruy firmly.

Thus apparently recalled to a consciousness of what was expected of him, and glancing hastily, almost timidly, about him, the old man, with a visible effort, slowly responded to Grandaville's demand.

"This young person, whoever she may be, undoubtedly has negro blood in her veins."

"My God! My God!" wildly exclaimed Ferdinand Castellos, as he staggered back, and would have fallen prostrate, had he not been supported to a seat.

His cry of agony aroused Isabella, who had given no sign at the physician's dreadful words, and springing up, she suddenly threw herself at her father's feet, and clasped him about the knees.

"O, father, father, do not cast me off! You said nothing should ever come between our hearts."

At these words, as if awaking from a painful dream, Ferdinand Castellos looked down into the up-turned face of the kneeling girl. He did not speak at once. It seemed as if he was gathering strength for the trial. Then, stretching out his open hands as if to repel something from him, he hissed through his white and tremulous lips the words :

"Slave—impostor—wench—curse upon ye!"

The repulse was too much for the overtaxed girl. She sunk down upon the floor at her father's feet, helpless, and to every appearance dead. And there she lay. Of the hundreds gazing upon the scene, not one stretched forth a hand to raise her. An hour before every arm in that assembly would have been at her service, but now—poor, hapless inheritor of the blood of a proscribed race, though of not enough to dim the lustre of her brow—she was a thing discarded, scorned, accursed!

Help, however, was to come from an unexpected source.

Being suddenly lifted up, she was quickly removed from the pressure of the throng and from the building. At the same moment her mother disappeared. Strangely enough, in the confusion that prevailed, not one of the many lookers-on took sufficient notice of the proceeding to afterwards describe the parties by whom the deed was done. All that could be learned was, that the insensible girl had been lifted into a close carriage that was apparently in waiting, belonging to whom no one knew, and driven by an entire stranger, and which, after an elderly lady had entered it, was driven rapidly away.

CHAPTER XIII.

A WOMAN'S POWER.

HERE was one other person who quickly disappeared from the scene of confusion into which the wedding-party and the attendant spectators were thrown by the disclosures recorded in the last chapter. Ruy Grandaville had no doubt of the truth of Aunt Esther's story. He only wondered that he had not suspected as much before. Now, when the discovery had been made, there was no one among the many that had been proud to do honor to the supposed heiress of the Castellos' estate and name, but at once recollected how often his or her suspicions had been aroused by something in the appearance of the young person upon whom they had so long lavished their flatteries and attentions. But Ruy was in possession of confirmatory evidence that the others did not have. He knew the other Isabella. He recognized in her chaste and brilliant beauty the indubitable proof of rightful heirship to the blood of an ancient and haughty ancestry. The whole case flashed upon his mind, and with it came the resolution that decided his course of action.

He did not regret what had occurred. He had never loved her who was so near being his wife, and now his passion for the supposed slave-girl—the true mistress, as it had proved—came back to him with a most pleasant memory. Why not make her his wife, he asked himself, and thus secure the property which had become so much of an object in his eyes in accepting matrimony, and at

the same time gratify the only real affection of his life? There was another inducement that urged him to this course. The real Isabella Castellos was well calculated to shine in society, and Ruy was familiar with her qualifications. There would be a novelty, a positive charm, in introducing her, with all the romance surrounding her singular career, among his aristocratic acquaintances, when he knew how brilliant would be the position she would achieve.

With such incentives, coming with the force and rapidity of intuitions, to spur him on, it is no wonder that Ruy Grandaville was anxious to withdraw himself from the crowd of noisy, gossiping idlers and ostentatious sympathizers by which he found himself surrounded, that he might at once take steps to secure the realization of his newly-awakened dream of happiness. Nor was there lacking another almost as powerful motive. He remembered with a cutting twinge the conveyance of Isabella he had that day made to the Yankee trader, and he was sufficiently aware of the character of that individual to know that he would lose no time in possessing himself of the prize. What if the hated Hawks were to reach Isabella first, not merely to subject her to insult, but to expose the heartlessness of the man who was about to ask her to become his wife! No time was to be lost. So, quietly withdrawing from the excited and oppressive throng, he hastened to place himself in the saddle, and at once set out for the plantation.

But his progress was not to be equal to his anxiety. In fact, his haste proved to be the chief hinderance to speed. Night having fallen soon after he had set out, he continued to urge the animal he was riding at a gait which led to a fall in the darkness, and the serious laming of the beast. The accident occurred in the midst of the swamp,

where no relief was to be obtained, and the only alternatives were to prosecute the journey on foot, or attempt to urge on the limping brute in the hope of his recovery. The latter seeming preferable, Grandaville, dismounting, led the poor creature for a distance, conforming to his slow and halting pace. The hurt to the beast, however, was more serious than his master had supposed, and at last losing all patience, Grandaville abandoned him, and pressed forward on foot as best he could. But time had already been lost, and other obstacles intervening, there were so many unexpected delays that the hour of midnight had arrived by the time the weary traveller reached his destination.

Hawks had not been much more fortunate in his journey. Having the advantage of an earlier start, he was the first to arrive at the plantation, but, owing to a chapter of accidents it is unnecessary to recount, night had already set in. There was, therefore, no alternative but for him to remain till morning.

Nor did that result promise to be in the least disagreeable. His reception by Isabella, to whom he lost no time in announcing himself the owner of all the people on the plantation, herself included, had been exceedingly gracious and flattering. He had expected some little demonstration of repugnance, but there was nothing of the kind. On the contrary, Isabella received the announcement of her transfer with a smile that quite fascinated her new master, and set him to congratulating himself more and more upon his good fortune.

The truth is that Isabella was not greatly surprised by Hawks' appearance in his new capacity, and shocked as she must have been by again meeting the man whom she knew only as Jefferson's brutal murderer, so thoroughly tutored had she become in the school of affliction, that

she was quite able to control any manifestation of her real feeling. What other motive she had for dissimulation, the sequel will show.

So, bidding the Yankee welcome, when he had told the story of her purchase, with a courtesy she conducted him into the mansion, inquired about his journey, and indulged in all the agreeable attentions which an accomplished, and especially a beautiful, woman, can so well bestow. Nor were the physical comforts he required forgotten. Wine was set before him, and in due time an abundant repast was at his service.

But still more to his taste did the susceptible Hawks find the cheerful talk and skilful blandishments of his entertainer. She rattled on with the freedom of an old and familiar friend. He was fairly bewildered. He had not been without some dread of meeting the woman who had so abashed him at their first encounter, and was now more than delighted with his reception. Little accustomed to the society of elegant females, he had no idea that a woman could make herself so clever. While he possessed sufficient knowledge of human nature to suspect that his character as master had something to do with her affability, his vanity led him to believe that his own attractions were not without their influence. But as Isabella, in his eyes, was his property, he could not see but that the fascination she exerted, whatever the cause, was rightfully his to enjoy, and he gave himself up to it accordingly.

Supper over, Hawks was conducted by Isabella to her own sitting apartment, the same in which Solorgne, upon his first visit to the plantation, had met her, and there placing herself at the piano, she played and sang in a way which more and more transported her auditor. As he listened to the rich tones of her voice, and gazed ad-

miringly upon her voluptuous form, as she sat at the instrument, the treasure he had acquired each moment gained fresh attractions in his eyes.

But music and a woman's charms were not all he had to intoxicate him. By Isabella's direction, wine was brought in, and again and again did she urge him to partake of it. If the superior quality of the liquor had not been inducement enough, her persuasions would have been quite irresistible. The influence of the insidious stimulant soon began to appear in the language of extravagant admiration he lavished upon his entertainer; and so graciously did she receive his uncouth compliments, that any suspicion he might have had of her sincerity quickly disappeared.

Only once did he meet with a repulse. Having, in a moment of unguarded enthusiasm, attempted to take some liberty with her person, she gave him a glance so full of reprobation that he shrank back quite intimidated. His embarrassment was but for a moment. A reassuring smile from Isabella, and the reflection that, being wholly in his power, she must sooner or later defer to his pleasure, quite restored his spirits.

"Now," said she, "I am about to sing my favorite piece. You must honor it by drinking the glass I shall pour for you."

He was in no way averse to the proposal.

Pouring a tumbler full of the wine, her hand, in passing over it, paused for a moment, and there was a movement as if something were being dropped from it; and then, with a bewitching smile, she extended the goblet to the already half-intoxicated man.

He took it from her hand, and at a draught emptied the vessel, smacking his lips after the delicious beverage.

She took her place at the instrument, and began to sing one of her most inspiring songs, throwing all the strength and fervency of her voice into the music.

Hawks listened for a few moments with an air of stupid admiration ; then, as if catching something of the spirit of the piece, broke out into the words of a ribald song with which he was familiar. The first stanza he delivered with considerable unction ; after which, the words came further and further apart. At last leaning forward, he rested his head upon his arms, crossed upon the table before him. Then the words ceased altogether, and the only sounds that came from him were those of the labored breathing of a heavy sleeper.

With a crash upon the instrument, as if in sudden anger, Isabella stopped the music. Rising, she turned and looked at the insensible man, and, as she did so, an expression of intense loathing and bitter hatred came over her pale, but animated features. Then, stepping to one side, she gave a bell-cord a sudden pull.

Rose appeared.

“Rose, tell Pomp and Mark to come here at once.”

Upon the entrance of two great, burly negroes, Isabella pointed to the slumbering Yankee.

“Take that thing,” she said, “to Massa Ruy’s room, and lay him upon Massa’s bed.”

She was obeyed without a word.

Another pull of the bell-cord.

“Rose, tell Eph I want him.”

Soon the old negro bearing that name appeared grinning and scraping at the door.

“Eph, at the hour of midnight precisely, it is my order that everybody on this plantation shall be in the Magnolia grove near the goblin’s tree. Remember, at the hour of midnight !”

"Yas, yas, Missey ; I'se understands. Dey'll all be dar."

And the old negro went away grinning, evidently full of his commission.

Stepping into an adjoining room, a few minutes afterwards Isabella re-appeared so disguised by a change of apparel as to be scarcely recognizable as the same person. She was now dressed in a costume which gave her a strangely weird and resolute look. A short skirt had taken the place of the flowing robe she had been wearing, and from beneath a handkerchief wound round her head in the form of a turban, her unbound hair flowed loosely over her half-naked shoulders. The fire in her eye showed that she was meditating some desperate purpose.

Bidding Rose accompany her, Isabella then passed out of the house, leaving the lights burning, and everything unchanged behind her.

Soon afterwards Grandaville arrived at the mansion. In vain did he look for conscious human being. Isabella's apartment he found as if it had just been occupied, but she was nowhere to be seen. The servants' rooms were all empty, although giving evidence of recent occupation. He wandered on, until he came to his own apartment, and there he discovered Hawks in the condition that has been described. Surmising that the others could not be far off, and being utterly worn down with fatigue, he threw himself upon a lounge, and was soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

A WOMAN'S VENGEANCE.

EVERY one accustomed to mingle with the negroes upon Southern plantations, at any time during the period of their enslavement, was aware that they retained many of the superstitions of their African ancestors. Not the least common of these was a belief in demons which exercised a supervisory control over humankind. The usual habitations of the goblins or spirits were supposed to be groves or trees, and these, in consequence, were regarded with extraordinary reverence. From the whites the existence of this veneration was carefully concealed ; and yet there was scarcely a plantation without its grove, which was looked upon as sacred because of the imputed residence of some deity. To this the poor bondsmen, when least suspected of an inclination to paganism, would secretly resort on occasions of unusual anxiety, to bestow their native offerings, and implore the kindly intercession of the invisible spirit.

In this regard "Massa Ruy's plantation" was not an exception. It had its sacred grove and its goblin's tree. Not far from the mansion stood a collection of dark magnolias, one of which, with a top that quite overlooked the others, and with foliage so dense that a deep shadow always slept beneath it, was looked upon as the chosen abode of the controlling demon of the place. This had been the destination of many a midnight pilgrimage, when trouble had entered the cabin of the slave,

and numerous were the offerings which had, from time to time, been left beneath the wide-spreading branches of the great tree, in the hope that the patron deity might be induced to restore health to the wasted body, or love to the alienated heart, of the cherished one.

The superstitious beliefs of the people left upon Ruy Grandaville's plantation, after the Yankee trader's first visit, had been greatly strengthened by the incidents attending it, casting a deep gloom, as they did, over all their hearts. The marvellous stories told by the Dragoness and other croakers of supernatural visitations and warnings had, likewise, had their influence. There was a general feeling, therefore, that evil was threatened, and that need of assistance from the Spirit that presided over the affairs of that plantation was more than ordinary urgent.

Had anything more been required to develope that feeling to the fullest extreme, it was had in the fact that the negroes' heathenish faith had received a most remarkable, but important, convert in Isabella. With the occurrence of the incidents heretofore described, she had begun to cultivate new relations with her fellow-servants. Always friendly with them, and beloved by them, she had before discouraged their barbarous beliefs, and sought to inculcate among them the doctrines of the Christian code; but since her return from the grave of Solorgne, she had pursued quite a different policy. Suddenly she had appeared in the secret religious gatherings of the other slaves, had given countenance to their heathenish rites, and by the time which I have now reached in the progress of my story, had come to be looked upon as one possessing in an eminent degree the favor of the local deity.

When, therefore, the message was sent round, that Isa-

bella required the presence of all the plantation's people in the haunted grove, for the purpose of making a midnight visit to the goblin's tree, in connection with the fact that a knowledge of the Yankee's second arrival had set all tongues to work with the dissemination of new stories of threatened evil, there was no one that dreamt of disobeying the command any more than if it had come direct from the demon himself.

Accordingly, the approach of midnight found a most singular collection of persons gathered upon the outskirts of the Magnolia grove. It embraced every resident human being on the plantation, except Isabella and her attendant Rose. The little party was huddled closely together, as if seeking safety in contiguity. When any one spoke, it was in a whisper, and had the darkness permitted an inspection of the countenances there assembled, it would have been no difficult matter to see that a great fear was resting upon the entire body.

It was easy to be seen that they were anxiously in wait of some person or thing. What the object of their solicitude was, appeared upon the sudden arrival of Isabella. At once there was a movement of welcome, which seemed to be both an exhibition of affection and of relief. There was no noisy demonstration—only that sort of flutter which showed the removal of restraint. But even that was speedily quieted.

Standing in the centre of the group which gathered about her as its controlling attraction, Isabella, now seeming in her new costume to have gained such an increase of altitude as to rise above all the others, spoke a few impressive words by way of preliminary explanation, and then proceeded :

“ In yonder mansion is your enemy and mine. There lies the murderer of Jefferson, and the man who calls

himself our master. Do you want to know your fate when he has got you in his clutches? I'll tell you. There's not one of you but will be whipped, starved and tortured. There's not a husband among you that can longer claim his wife ; not a mother that can longer keep her child. Some of you will be killed, not as Jefferson was, but by inches, by days and nights of agony and blood. Some of you will be sold to the sugar plantations ; some will be used to feed the lusts of the monster, and of men like him. There's not one of you but had better be dead ! Listen. We are slaves. That means that we have been robbed of our freedom by those who are stronger, not better, than ourselves. Your fathers and mothers, and mine many generations back, were as free as those who now call themselves our masters. They were stolen and brought here, that they and you and I might be made slaves. It is thus that we have become the spoil of our oppressors. But we are not without help. The gods of our fathers have followed us to the land of the stranger. They still hear our cry of distress, and will stand between us and our enemies. Let us go to the demon. Let us ask him for counsel. Let us obey his voice."

The words of the speaker, as here given, can convey but little of the emphasis and potency they possessed, as they came hissing from the lips of that tall and passionate woman, and fell upon the ears of men and women who were ready to receive them as the direct result of inspiration. Of course there could be but one response, and the entire company, Isabella leading, was soon making its way with quick, but almost noiseless, tread, among the shadows of the dark magnolias, towards the goblin's tree.

The night was one well calculated for the strange and solemn work of superstition. The moon was shining

brightly, but swiftly-flying clouds obscuring its face, made long and mysterious shadows that chased each other like things of life, and the winds, brief and fitful, sang and sighed among the branches which one moment were lifted threateningly, and the next had sunk to a sullen repose. Everything about the hour and scene tended to produce the wildest and most fanciful conclusions. No wonder the half barbarous and untutored beings who followed Isabella's lead, believed that they were going into the immediate presence of deity !

Ere long, they stood before a dark mass of foliage that rose between them and the sky, and in which they believed to be hidden the spirit they had come to consult.

Isabella fell upon her knees, and extended her arms towards the great shadowy body. Then her voice rose sharp and distinct upon the still night air.

“ Demon—god of our fathers, behold us at thy feet ! If thou dost still hear the cry and avenge the wrongs of the race thou once didst love, hear us, and make thy presence known ! ”

There was absolute stillness for a minute, during which the position of the suppliant remained unchanged. Then the leaves in the great tree began to rustle, although not a breath of air at the moment was stirring ; next the top-most branches were violently shaken, as if some heavy body were moving through them ; and then there came a sound, first like an infant's wail, which gradually grew louder and louder, until in a burst of demoniac-like laughter it ceased and died away on a passing blast of wind.

Such a demonstration, under ordinary circumstances, would have completely unmanned the ignorant people who had followed Isabella to that singular place. But now the effect was directly the reverse. Believing the

sounds they had heard to be the voice of their god, thus showing his readiness to befriend them in the hour of their peril, they were filled with a strange and enthusiastic courage, preparing them for any desperate deed that might be ordered.

Again the voice of Isabella arose.

"Spirit that loves and helps the oppressed ! show us, we pray thee, how we are to escape the hands of one who would crush us to dust, the cruellest enemy of thy people ! "

Again there was silence, and then the branches began to move ; but this time, instead of the voice being heard, a light suddenly burst upon the scene, and a great blazing object went hissing upward, until far in the air it burst with a loud report, sending out hundreds of fiery serpents that hissed and sparkled before going out in darkness.

By the time the blacks, to whom such a display was wholly unaccountable, except as a result of supernatural power, had partially recovered from their surprise, another object, equally mysterious, had claimed their attention.

A ball of fire was seen descending through the branches of the tree, slowly bounding from limb to limb, and which finally, reaching the earth, flamed up until the space beneath the great magnolia was brighter than it had ever been at noonday. Another wonder then appeared. Piled up around the trunk of the tree were to be seen a number of torches ready for the lighting.

"The command of the demon !" shouted Isabella, springing to her feet, and rushing forward. "We are to destroy our enemy with fire."

At once all was confusion and hurry. Eagerly seizing the torches, each one, following Isabella's example, kindled his or her brand at the supposed spirit-lighted flame,

and the entire body started furiously in the direction of the mansion.

It was a strange and terrible spectacle. The torch-bearers, soon falling into line, wound in and out among the trees, and sped across the lawn, like a great fiery serpent. At their head was Isabella. With one naked arm she held aloft her blazing fagot, while her long hair, floating loosely backward, fairly glowed and sparkled in the sheen. Followed by her black-skinned attendants, each with a crackling, smoking, brand of flame, she seemed like a Fury leading a troop of devils in a murderous forray. Scarcely had the excited and now half-crazed company rushed from the great tree, when another object might have been seen descending among its branches. This time it was something black. Striking the ground, it rolled over several times as if endowed with volition. Then rising to its feet, it might have been seen to be not only a human being, but the boy Frog, whose presence there, under such circumstances, sufficiently explained the phenomena that had just been witnessed. He had been the instrument used by Isabella for reaching persons so utterly dispirited by a life of oppression that they could be aroused to a deed of violence only through an appeal to their superstitions.

Having at last got himself securely on his feet, the boy picked up a torch, kindled it at the rapidly disappearing fire-ball, and waving it several times round his head, set off in pursuit of the others.

At last the long line of fire became stationary. The mansion had been reached. One after another the torch-bearers halted in the presence of the familiar structure. In the light of their blazing brands the great, solemn form and long verandas of the old building were sharply revealed. All was silent and dream-like. The

window-panes glistened in the unwonted illumination, but no human countenance looked out upon the extraordinary spectacle. By its very speechlessness the venerable pile seemed to protest against the threatened devastation.

The delay was but momentary. Isabella, detecting the first faint sign of hesitation on the part of her followers, rushed forward and pressed her fagot against the side of the building, at the very point where her own luxurious apartment was situated. That act revived the flagging courage of the others. The next moment every torch was applied, and the mad, fiery riot had begun.

The old building, dried by the winds and suns of many seasons, was little more than a mass of tinder. It seemed but a second before the consuming element, seizing upon its prey, set about the work of annihilation. The flames crackled and sparkled as with demoniac laughter. The long fire-tongues shot upward, licking the parched timbers and converting into a mass of glowing flame all they touched, higher and higher ascending, until, overlapping cornice and roof, they leaped far in air, and waved to and fro like the arms of victors in their triumph. Wider and wider spread the circle of illumination, until tree and shrub and arbor, one after another, came into view like so many wondering spectators. The heavens above put on the angry, brazen glare which always marks the conflagration, and the stars disappeared, lost in the depths of that fatal splendor.

But the only fury was not that of the elements. The negroes, catching the fierce incentive of the scene, leaped and danced and sang with equal madness. The excitement of the hour had driven them almost to lunacy. The consequential Eph vied with the scampish Frog in the grotesqueness of his pranks, and the shrewish Drag-oness for once seemed immoderately happy.

There was one exception. With her arms folded across her bosom, her eye sternly surveying the ruin of which she had been the instigator, and her whole body at ease, Isabella stood with the light falling full upon her, as quiet, and apparently as indifferent, as if she had been carved from marble.

Meanwhile the work of desolation went furiously on. The flames roared with a horrid jubilation ; showers of sparks whirled swiftly upward ; and the black smoke, gathering luridly overhead, floated silently off into the darkness beyond. The whole building was now wrapped in a sheet of leaping, blinding fire, except one solitary portion. That was a sort of observatory, such as is often seen on Southern houses of the old style, consisting of an uncovered platform near the centre of the building, raised a few feet above the highest point of the roof, and enclosed with a broken balustrade. It could only be reached by a stairway ascending from the interior of the house. That portion of the old structure, having so far escaped the destroyer, stood sharply and vividly revealed, an island in a surging mass of flame. It was soon to become the point of absorbing interest.

Slowly, as the triumphant fire was tossing and sweeping around it, reserving that last morsel of the doomed mansion for its terrible feast, a human figure, emerging by the interior stairway already spoken of, was seen rising into view. A shout, fierce and derisive, from the jubilant negroes greeted its appearance, for who could be there at that time except the hated trader, their new master, and the murderer of poor Jefferson ? Quickly, however, the shout died away, as the devoted man gained his feet and turned his face towards the jeering spectators. He was Ruy Grandaville !

. How utterly hopeless his situation, he seemed to real-

ize at a glance. Turn which way he might, he was belted with fire. Calmly folding his arms, he looked about him with the stoicism of a martyr.

All were not so composed.

A scream, so wild, so loud that it rose even above the roar of the flames and the crash of falling timbers, rent the air, and Isabella sprang towards the blazing mass. Her purpose, whatever it might have been, was to fail. A sudden current of blinding air and smoke meeting her, bore rather than drove her back, and left her lying insensible, but secure from the hungry flame.

The doomed man, amid all that terrible surrounding, caught the sound, and his eye witnessed the act. Bending eagerly forward he stretched forth his hands. A look of horrible agony passed over his face. His lips moved, but before a word he uttered could be caught, a crashing sound arose that drowned every other. The fire had won its final victory. Roof, observatory and all went down into the red, seething billows below. A pillar of flame and smoke, and crackling, flying fragments shot upward, and everything was lost in the whirl and rush of an indescribable commotion.

When the appalled and blinded spectators again looked on the scene, all was changed. The old mansion was gone. Both it and its master had disappeared. Naught remained but an indistinguishable, sweltering mass of fire.

CHAPTER XV.

NORTHWARD BOUND AND CONCLUSION.

N the day, and at the hour, of the interrupted wedding, a vessel about to sail for New York was lying at the New Orleans levee. Steam was up, the cargo was on board, the pilot was at his post, the captain was impatiently pacing the deck, and yet the command to unmoor was not given. Suddenly, however, a carriage was driven to the landing, a female closely enveloped, as became one who was manifestly an invalid, was lifted out and carried on board the ship, followed by an old woman and one other attendant, and then was conveyed to a state-room in which she and her companions disappeared. The carriage, having thus disposed of its inmates, was driven away as rapidly as it came ; and the plank connecting it with the shore being drawn in, the vessel moved out into the stream, and was soon speeding away on its voyage.

The person thus carried on board, as the reader will readily infer, was Isabella, before known as Isabella Castellos.

She was still in a great measure unconscious, but plied with restoratives she began to exhibit signs of a clearer comprehension. It was evident, from her occasional exclamations, that her mind, as far as it was capable of any distinct conception, was running on the exciting incidents through which she had just passed.

“ Father, father, I am still your child ! ” she would cry out with a sudden start ; and then she would sink back into a weary rest even more painful to the beholder.

But gradually, soothed by the tireless efforts of her attendants, assisted, as they were, by the dreamy motions of the boat, she went off into a more natural slumber, broken only at increasing intervals ; and as the night was passing into the morning, seemed to be enjoying a healthful and refreshing rest.

All the night long, Aunt Esther, for she was the elderly person referred to, sat by the couch of the worn and delicate girl, without closing her eyes. There was a troubled look upon her brow, such as it had seldom shown ; and well there might be. Had she not dragged that poor creature down from a position of envied eminence to the very lowest in the world's estimation ? Birth, wealth and social rank had all been stripped from the slumberer lying so helplessly there, in an instant and by a single blow, and she—that silent watcher by her side—was alone responsible for their loss. No wonder she awaited with painful solicitude the waking moment.

It came at last.

Isabella opened her eyes, just as the rays of the rising sun had reached her couch. She looked about her wonderingly for a moment, and then closed them again. It was evident that she was recalling, one by one, the incidents through which she had passed, and thus was explaining to her own mind, as best she could, the mystery of her situation.

O, how the heart of that old woman by her side, during that interval, beat and throbbed !

The trial was soon to be over.

Opening her eyes once more, and turning them on Aunt Esther, Isabella began :

“ Mother ! ”

That word told everything. It was a recognition of the new relation she was about to sustain to the woman

addressed. The term “mamma” might be employed by an affectionate mistress in speaking to a faithful servant, but “mother” was the language of a daughter to a parent.

Before she could say another word, the old woman’s arms were about the speaker, straining her to her bosom.

“O, child, child, you have so relieved my heart! I was afraid you would never forgive me.”

“Forgive you, mother! I had nothing to forgive. I know what you mean, but the wrong was not towards me. You did right in exposing the imposition. If I was not the lawful heir, I had no business with the position. And if I have lost a father I have gained a mother; but oh, poor, poor, dear, dear father!”

At this point the speaker broke down completely, hiding her face on her mother’s bosom. Soon, however, regaining her composure, she proceeded:

“I dreamt as I was awaking, mother, that my sister, Isabella, had become the wife of Ruy Grandaville. Is it so?”

“I presume it is, child. Ruy wanted to marry you for the property; and when he found it to belong to the other one, he would not miss his opportunity of securing it. I think his heart inclined him more to your sister than to yourself.”

“Then my dear sister has been raised in my fall, and my father will still have a daughter to love—thank Heaven!”

“But where are we, mother?” exclaimed Isabella, looking about upon the strange objects surrounding her. “This room seems to move. Is this not a vessel, and are we not upon the water?”

“Yes, child, we are upon the water—going to that Northern country you were speaking of, where there are

no slaves, and where the children are not forever cursed because of their parents' blood."

"O, then we will see the mother of that good, dear young man who died for the like of you and me, and we can comfort her with tidings of the dead!"

"Yes, my dear child, we will see her, and we will comfort her; but it will not be with tidings of the dead, but of the living."

"What do you mean, mother?"

"You shall see."

With that the old woman left the room, and very soon returned. But she did not return alone.

Charles Brown and Isabella once more had met in the land of the living.

Not long after the incidents above described, the slave-boy, Tully, in passing along one of the streets of New Orleans upon an errand for his master, Seabry Anthony, Esq., was attracted by a crowd of people, partly colored and partly white, collected about some object of more than ordinary interest. Elbowing his way among them to the interior circle, he found an old man in a thin and tremulous voice appealing to the persons about him. He was tall, and in person and apparel gave evidence of former dignity and consequence, but now it was plain enough that he was a wreck both in body and mind. The weak, indecisive expression of his countenance, and the hopeless, hungry look of his eyes, as well as the language he was using, showed that his reason was unsettled. Nothing could be more pitiful than the imbecile, helplessly eager way in which, turning from one to another, he repeated over and over his appeal:

"Have you seen my daughter? She was white; they lied when they said she wasn't. She has good blood; noble blood, I tell ye. Oh! have you seen her? Tell me, have you seen her?"

"What does the old cove say?" cried some one on the outskirts of the crowd.

"He wants ter find his gal," shouted one from the interior. "Has any ov yer chaps got her?"

And then there was a loud, thoughtless laugh.

"Stand aside there," exclaimed a powerful, well-dressed man, forcing his way through the throng of idlers. "Are ye not ashamed to be making sport of one like him?"

Reaching the side of the old man, the new-comer took his arm and led him away like a child, but casting about him, as he went, a look of helpless, piteous inquiry.

A few days after the incident just described, the New Orleans papers announced the death of Ferdinand Castellos, containing at the same time lengthy obituary notices full of praises of his life and character.

A short time passed, and the same papers contained an advertisement subscribed by Seabry Anthony, describing himself as "administrator of Ferdinand Castellos, deceased," wherein a liberal reward was offered for any information which would lead to the finding of Isabella, daughter and sole heiress of the deceased intestate.

The reward was never claimed, because the desired information was never furnished. After the night of the burning of Ruy Grandaville's mansion-house, Isabella, the legitimate daughter of Ferdinand Castellos, wholly disappeared. Some thought she had taken her own life; others that she had changed her name, and taken refuge in a convent. The only thing positive was that the most diligent inquiry failed to reveal any trace of her; and the large estate that was rightfully hers, remained to occupy

the courts, and eventually to enrich the lawyers, among whom, it is scarcely necessary to add, that Seabry Anthony, Esq., was one of the chief beneficiaries.

That very respectable gentleman continued to increase in wealth and his own estimation, until the breaking out of the rebellion, when, being a Southern man, and a slave-holder, he espoused the cause of treason ; and upon the arrival in New Orleans of the Union troops under General Butler, he was not only compelled to leave the city, but lost a considerable portion of his property, including Tully.

The war was over, which had brought doubt and apprehension and mourning to millions of hearts, and to others hope and gladness, because it brought them freedom. Boston had a gala-day. Her heroes who had survived the battle for the nation's life, were returning to their homes, and her patriotic population had turned out with banners and music and grateful words to meet and welcome them.

Among the handsome equipages that lined the principal streets through which the procession was expected to pass, was one that attracted more than ordinary attention. It was an open barouche, of elegant construction, in which were seated a lady and two children. The happy countenance of the lady, notwithstanding a complexion that indicated a Southern origin, can be readily accounted for, when it is known that she was the wife of Colonel Charles Brown, then commanding a Union regiment that had been stationed for some time in New Orleans, and which was that day to make part of the expected procession.

The younger child, a sprightly boy of five or six, who was bravely dressed out in a suit of blue and a military cap, and who carried in his hand a miniature national flag, resting his arms upon the lady's lap, and looking up anxiously in her face, asked :

"Mamma, will papa never go away to war any more?"

"No, Ferdie dear, he will never go to war again ; for now we are to have peace."

As she said this, the proud and happy mother bent down and pressed a kiss upon the glowing cheek of her boy, upon which at the same time fell a tear not born of unhappiness.

But just then a great cheer arose. The military had come in sight. The swords of the officers and the bright bayonets of the rank and file gleamed in the sun. Banners that had gone through many a battle-storm, and bore upon them the marks of the conflict, swayed and flashed as with the pride of victory. Nearer and nearer came the music and the roll of the drums, and pretty soon was heard the tramp, tramp, tramp of the veterans who were executing their last march amid the cheers and welcomes of grateful countrymen. O, it was a gallant spectacle, and a joyous one !

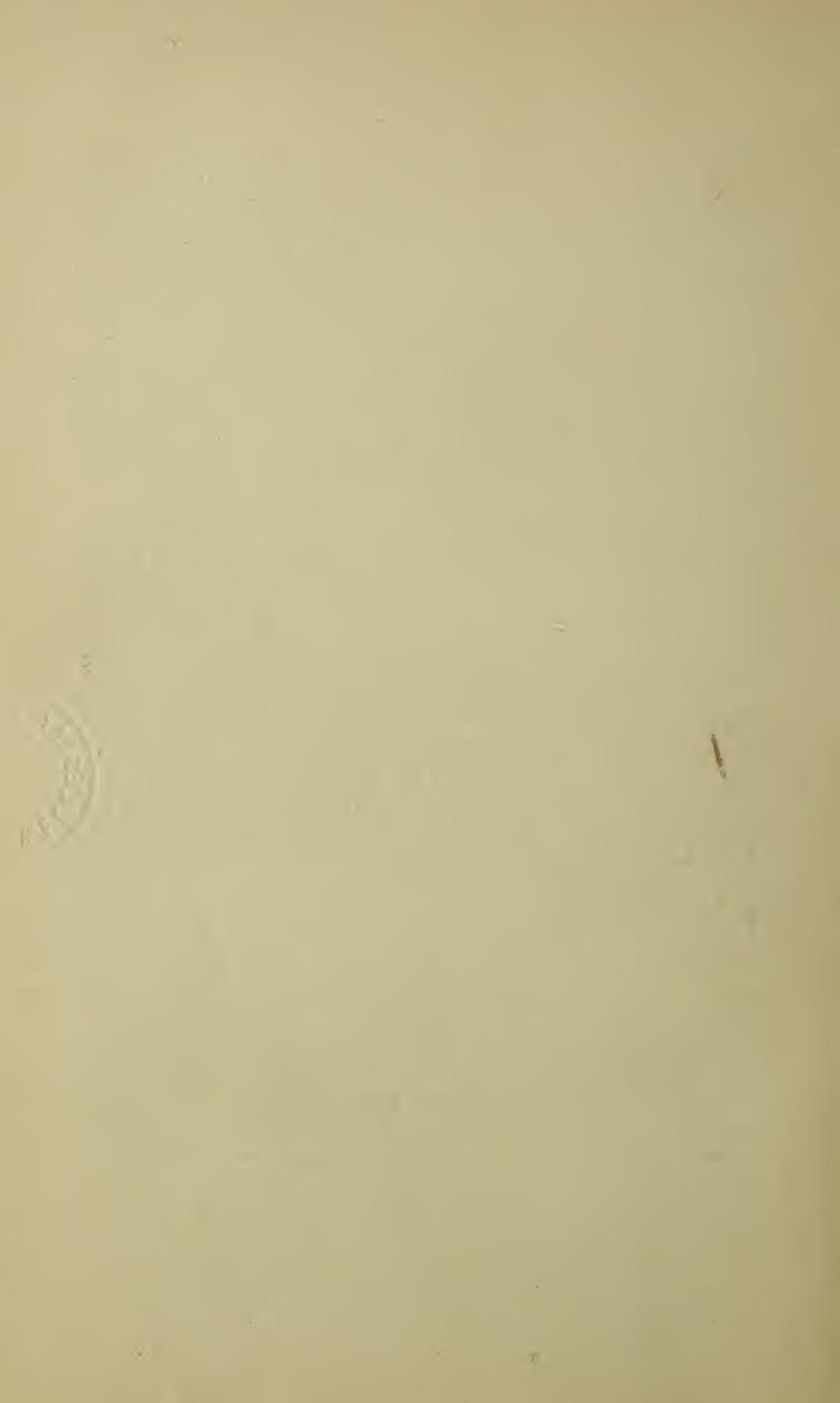
At the head of the regiment which, on account of its honorable service, had been assigned the leading place in the procession, rode a tall and graceful officer, yet in the prime of life, who was honored, as he rode forward, with round after round of applause. Pleasantly, but gravely, he acknowledged the compliments he received from time to time ; but O ! what brightness lit up his bronzed and manly features as, coming opposite the barouche already spoken of, he caught the tearful smiles of that happy mother, and witnessed the exultant, gleeful happiness of the dancing, shouting children by her side.

There was not a soldier in that regiment but was proud to have it known that he had served under Colonel Charles Brown ; and certainly there was not among all those who had followed and served with him, one who, on that auspicious day, was more grateful and happy, nor had greater reason to be so, than Tully, once a slave, but now a freeman. Having become attached to the command of Colonel Brown, first as his body servant, in the South, he had accompanied him to the North, and that day followed him, with the consciousness that he was henceforth to know him as his benefactor and friend.

Slowly, column on column, rank on rank, moved on those battle-tried warriors, with their burnished arms, their shot-torn banners, their great grim-mouthed cannon, and their pealing, stirring music, until the glorious pageant passed and faded away ; the carriages, with their joyous occupants, one after another disappeared ; and the thousands who had gathered to welcome and honor the returning heroes went to their homes, rejoicing in the knowledge that a work, in the results of which millions were to be blessed, had been nobly, bravely done.

So ends my story.

THE END.



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